

Sight and Sound



CINEMA'S LUNATICS

Nigel Hawthorne in
'The Madness
of King George'

BEFORE TARANTINO

Allison Anders
and 'Mi Vida Loca'

IN VIETNAM

After 'Green Papaya'

AMERICAN RULES

bell hooks
on 'Hoop Dreams'

VIDEOS

From Dracula to the
Taviani Brothers

BODY SHOCKS

ROMAN POLANSKI: from 'Death
and the Maiden' to 'Chinatown'
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Mus Franju's surrealist nightmare 'Eyes without a Face'; music, horror and Dario Argento

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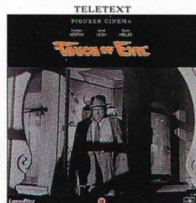
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Sight and Sound

April 1995



'Death and the Maiden': 6



'Mi Vida Loca': 14



'One Hundred and One Dalmations': 55

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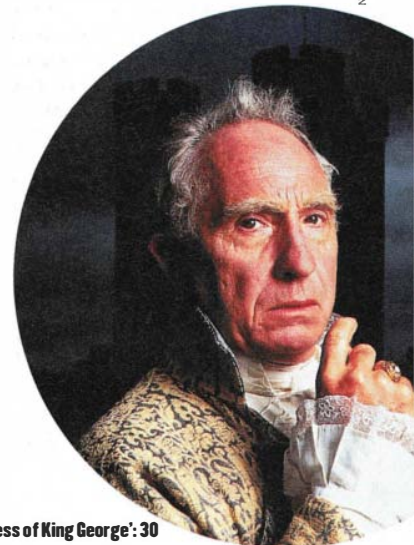
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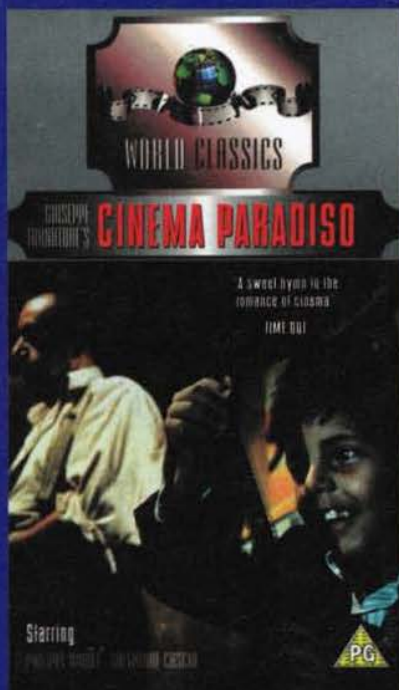
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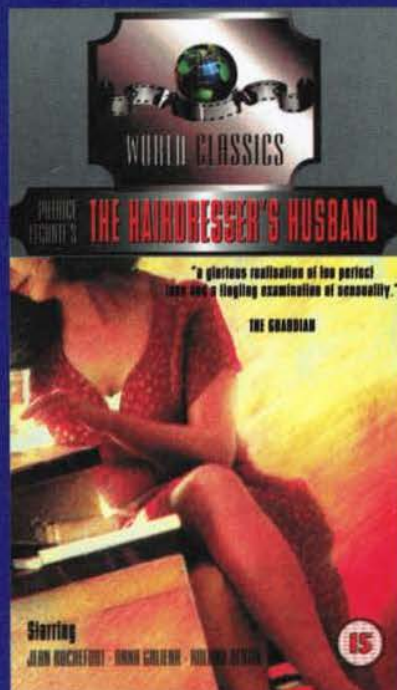
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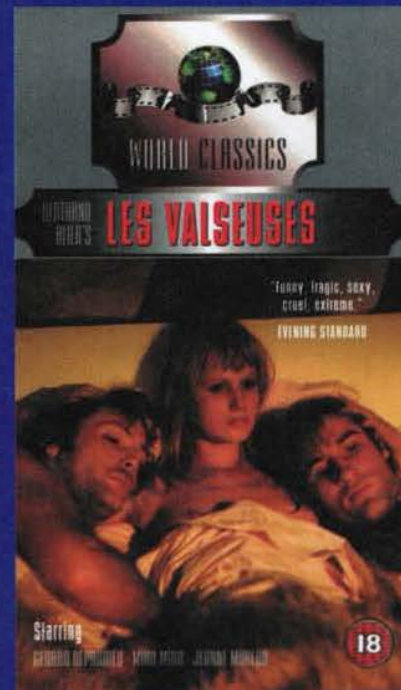
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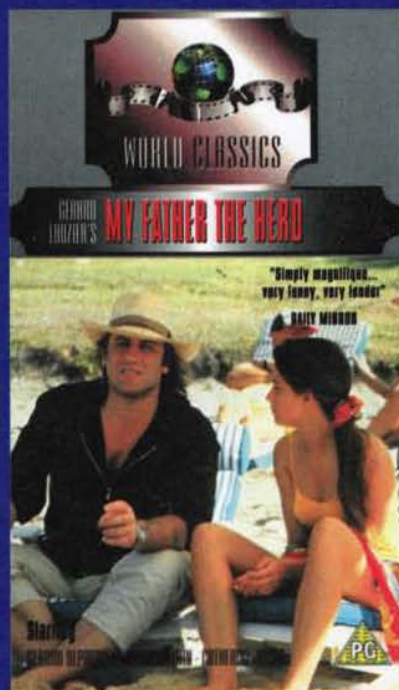
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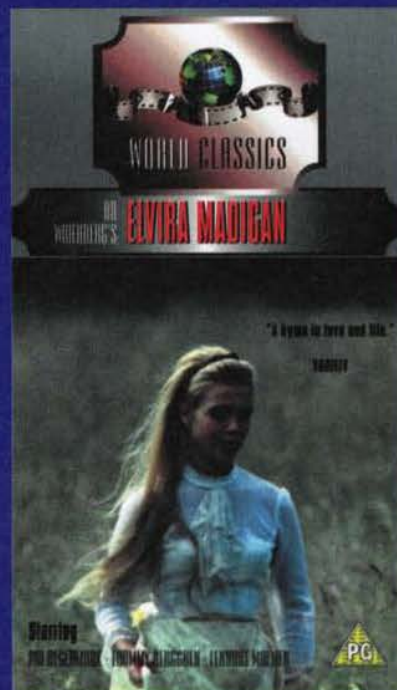
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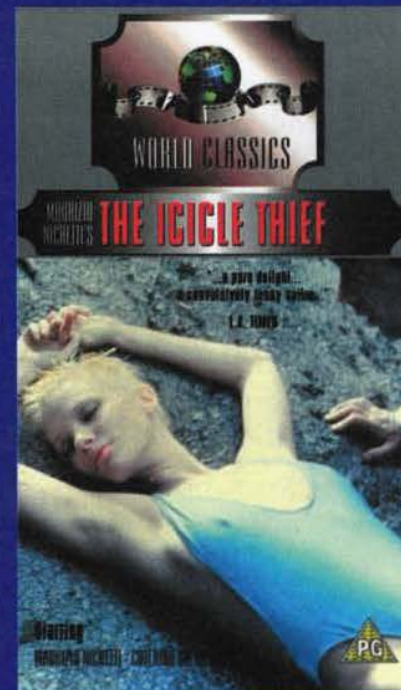
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Million dollar brain

Contributors to this issue

Paul Burston is the author of *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Popular Culture*

Jonathan Coe's novel *What a Carve Up!* was shortlisted for the Whitbread and

The Guardian fiction prizes

Jenny Diski's *The Vanishing Princess and Other Stories*, a collection of her short stories, is forthcoming from Weidenfeld and Nicolson

Lizzie Francke is the author of the recently published *Script Girls*

bell hooks has recently published *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*

Philip Kemp is writing a biography of Michael Balcon

Tony Rayns is a film critic who recently curated the ICA season of Korean cinema

B. Ruby Rich is a San Francisco-based critic and film commentator for CBC Radio

Iain Sinclair's most recent novel is *Radon Daughters*. He has also made films with Chris Petit

Philip Strick has written extensively on a wide range of cinema

David Thompson is a filmmaker and writer whose films on Jean Renoir will be screened on BBC this summer. He is presently making a film on Ennio Morricone

What does it say about the possible character of a future British cinema that, within the space of six months, the movie rights for two as yet unpublished novels by British authors have been sold for a million dollars or more? Why are such deals front-page news when similar deals with American authors are now fairly common?

Working Title, the British-based production arm of Dutch media conglomerate PolyGram, recently paid one million dollars for the film rights for *Gridiron*, a new novel by thriller writer Philip Kerr. Chosen as one of the 20 Best of the Young British Novelists by *Granta* in 1993, Kerr's credits include the TV series *Grushko*, along with such thrillers as *The Pale Criminal*. The extraordinary size by British standards of the *Gridiron* fee was reported on page one of the 7 March *Guardian* and in *The Times*. The reports were a reminder that in October last year, Robert Redford paid three million dollars for the film rights of *The Horse Whisperer* after a four-way bidding war – before its British author Nicholas Evans had even completed it.

Yet with so many blockbuster movies based on popular American novels being sold on the backs of their authors' rather than their auteurs' names, the money paid for *The Horse Whisperer* is perhaps the less surprising of the two deals. After all, in the popular press, it's John Grisham's *The Client*, and it's Michael Crichton's *Disclosure*: neither Joel Schumaker nor Barry Levinson signify to the same degree. Besides, Redford's purchase of a romantic tale of a middle-aged man who has a special way with horses on the basis of a few presumably evocative chapters is as much an indicator of a paucity of roles for greying matinée idols as anything else.

Also, when you consider that the average Hollywood movie now costs around \$30 million, Redford's apparent gamble looks a sensible acquisition of assets. Any convincing literary property in a similar milieu to Robert James Wallah's *The Bridges of Madison County* was likely to be hyped up for a bidding auction in the wake of that book's

huge success. Nevertheless, the Redford purchase does demonstrate how far-reaching and aggressive Hollywood's tentacles have become. Studio development scouts now haunt the Frankfurt Book Fair as diligently as the Sundance film festival.

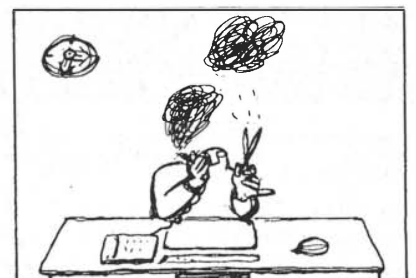
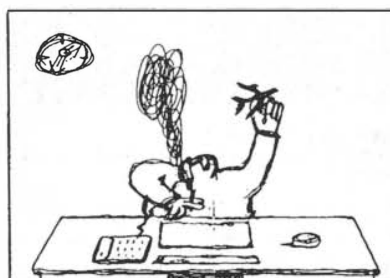
Several inferences might be drawn from this: that films released on the back of popular novels are proving more successful than ever, that truly fresh movie ideas are rare, or that the Robert McKee model of the perfectly structured original screenplay, once so popular with studio executives, has proven less fruitful than hoped. But far above these, *The Horse Whisperer* irrefutably shows that you no longer have to go to Hollywood to become part of it.

Gridiron's purchase underlines this point, but it adds a neat inversion – that you have to be part-Hollywood to make a go of it. Working Title's willingness to bid one million dollars for *Gridiron* not only proclaims its determination to be seen as a major international player on the back of its huge success with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, it also proves that Working Title is determined to be just as aggressive in seeking new properties as its Hollywood rivals. As if to emphasise its autonomy as a movie power, Working Title has declared its intention to shoot the interiors of *Gridiron* in Britain, despite the book's LA setting.

Philip Kerr's novel, set in the near future, is about a 'smart' building, one in which all functions are controlled by an artificial intelligence – the direction in which, according to Kerr, modern architecture is currently taking us. A glitch causes the building to turn against its occupants and one by one they are killed. Could it be that the movie business is starting to operate as a 'smart' city, one in which actual location in the world is not as important as whether you speak the language? Or is Working Title, along with the Scott Brothers as the new owners of Shepperton, part of a distinctively British production resurgence? We'll know if it's the latter when the million-dollar deals no longer make the front page.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, Pepsi love the script & will pony-up for an on-can promotion, and if we can promise Delta two taxing shots, & a rethink on the mid-air collision they'll bite. Now if Keanu will commit I can approach the American Cardboard Federation.'

The business

● Since the UK has just been exposed to John Candy's last, sad screen appearance in the unfortunate *Wagons East!*, it will perhaps interest readers to know that his penultimate role could well remain on the (video) shelf.

Given that Candy was, in his 16-year career, no more successful than any other mid-range Hollywood star in consistently choosing – or being in a position to choose – good scripts, this may not be all that surprising. But it may not just have been a question of quality, either: the performance in question was in a movie called *Canadian Bacon*, the debut as a feature-film director of Michael Moore, known for his hilarious documentary *Roger and Me*, and for the series *TV Nation* which was a hit over here but didn't tickle so many American fancies.

This seems to be the problem with *Canadian Bacon*. A subversive comedy about relations between the United States and its northern neighbour (Candy's birthplace), the film appears to have fallen foul of the Newt Factor (that's to say, the recent mid-term elections, during which America made one of its periodic lurches to the right).

An enthusiastic start-of-shoot press release describes Moore's film as "a contemporary comedy set in post-Cold War America, where defence contractors face the prospect of bankruptcy. The President of the United States, depressed over his falling approval ratings, approves a plan concocted by his advisers to convince the American public that the new enemy is – Canada."

Candy plays Bud Boomer, the gung-ho sheriff of Niagara Falls, who needs no encouragement from the beleaguered President (Alan Alda) to turn on the Canucks. Rhea Perlman, star of *Cheers* and wife of Danny DeVito, plays Boomer's deputy, who rivals him in anti-Canadianism.

The film was shot nearly 18 months ago (October-December 1993) and its US release – through MGM/UA – had already been postponed once when, just before Christmas, it was abruptly dropped from the schedule altogether. The producers, Propaganda Films, said they were "disappointed with it". Sources suggested that it had tested very badly, but Moore denied this, telling *Daily Variety* that only "teenagers who hang out in malls and don't know the name of the Governor of California don't get this film. Baby boomers who live in cities do get it and love it. So now we know our audience."

Moore also lashed out at Propaganda Chairman Steve Golin ("This is the man who brought us *Daddy's Dyin'... Who's Got the Will?*, *Kalifornia* and *A Stranger among Us*, a film that asked us to accept Melanie Griffith as a Hasidic woman," he snarled, somewhat overlooking the fact that Golin had already produced all three of



Northern exports: the late John Candy in 'Wagons East!', above; Michael Moore, top

those films when Moore took *Canadian Bacon* to him). The director was particularly irate about the company's alleged refusal to let the film screen at the Sundance Festival. This, he said, was because Propaganda was worried that it might get a reputation for being anti-American. Propaganda denies this.

A more likely scenario is that Moore's film was the victim of the corporatisation of Propaganda Films which, in addition to the turkeys mentioned by Moore, also produced David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* and is currently preparing Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady*. It is now part of the PolyGram empire. Golin's partner and Propaganda co-founder Sigurjon (Johnny) Sighvatsson left the day *Canadian Bacon* was shelved.

Since then Propaganda's films have moved from the niche to the mainstream. Current productions include *French Kiss* (formerly *Paris Match*), starring Meg Ryan and Kevin Kline, and *Boys*, with Winona Ryder. Subversive, lowish-budget comedies (the word on Moore's film is \$12 million) don't quite fit the new profile.

But *Canadian Bacon* will not – as once rumoured – go straight to video. In February, PolyGram announced that the film would be released this autumn (22 September) through its own subsidiary, Gramercy Pictures, which has handled a number of the company's less mainstream efforts – including *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

But don't hold your breath for a major international theatrical release. **A**nd now for some news about films that are not only being made but actually ought to be. Latest recruit to the Quentin Tarantino school of low-budget-film-makers-turned-saviours-of-Hollywood is Kevin Smith, whose foul-mouthed but extremely funny film 'Clerks' was a hit at Cannes 1994.

The film – about a pair of disabused guys from Jersey who work behind the till in a convenience store – was, says Smith, always meant to be part of a trilogy.

Following its success, the director is now embarking on the second film, called 'Mall Rats', which will star Shannen Doherty (yes, she who got kicked off 'Beverly Hills 90210'). Production on the \$6 million comedy was about to begin as S&S went to press.

● A while ago, this column looked at the sad state of the great film studios of Europe. Well, it's getting sadder. La Victorine, the idyllic facility of a hillside overlooking Nice, went into receivership at the end of January.

Thrown into crisis (as already reported here) by the cancellation of *Nostromo* after the death of David Lean, La Victorine was taken over by French property developer Claude Rey in 1992, along with its old debts and one quite new one: Ffr 20 million (£2.5 million), which was supposed to have been used for refurbishment, but which was apparently dipped into to shore up the chaotic cashflow.

La Victorine wasn't the only French studio to shutter this winter. A month or so later, Europa Studios at Arpajon, south of Paris – most recently home to *La Cité des enfants perdus*, the new fantasy epic from *Delicatessen*'s creators, Caro and Jeunet – also shut down.



Foul-mouthed and funny: 'Clerks', a hit at Cannes, is to be part of a trilogy, above; its director Kevin Smith, right

Now that Hollywood has sorted out the Commies in China – they shut down their illegal tape-copying factories (well, some of them anyway) and the flow of blockbusters resumed – the attention of the US film industry's export managers has turned to Vietnam.

December saw the release – via UIP and Hong Kong-based Golden Harvest – of the first Hollywood film to be officially distributed in Vietnam since 1975. It opened simultaneously last December in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The film? 'True Lies'.

A politically active youth rather than innate good taste prevented Mr. Busy from intro-ing this item with some glib piece of gonzo journalism along the lines of "where General Westmoreland failed, Schwarzenegger marches in..."

But I got it in anyway.

● Am I alone in noticing the return in the 'quality' press of that hoary old journalistic stand-by, the film review masquerading as social history – you know, those articles illustrated with huge stills from *Forrest Gump*, *Natural Born Killers* or *Disclosure* which turn out to be musings on America's drift to the right, the impact of violence or the sexual counter-revolution?

In his earlier incarnation as an academic, Mr. Busy was guilty of quite a few of these, in which pages of close textual analysis and ingenious interpretation arrived at the shocking conclusion that Hollywood was essentially conservative.

The current kerfuffle about the *Disclosure* poster is an interesting case in point. The Germans seem quite happy with it. But the French (who have no truck with Crichton's naff title and call the film *Harcèlement*) are for once united with London Transport and Merseyside in finding the image of M. Douglas' hands on D. Moore's backside objectionable.

So, in France, they're using the original US poster art – a profile of Moore either whispering in the ear of or about to bestow a *bisou* on Douglas who is half-turned towards her with that puzzled expression he adopts



when acting a serious part. All the campaigns use the "Sex is power" tag.

Oh, and by the way, the poster for *Pret-a-Porter* – the one with Helena Christensen obscured by feathers – was also deemed too risqué for American viewers. Aren't we lucky to live in such a liberal country?

PolyGram Filmed Entertainment haven't been the only ones making the best of a bad job this past winter. Take the press statement that came out of the Berlin Film Festival at the end of January, announcing that Lia van Leer, the energetic and much-liked director of the Jerusalem Film Festival, had been appointed Chair of the Festival Jury. This, said the statement, was not just because of van Leer's own "extraordinary contribution" to world cinema, but was a way of expressing solidarity with the Middle East peace progress 50 years after the Holocaust.

Sadly, the motive seems to have been rather less noble. One of the earliest appointments to the Berlin Jury, van Leer was reportedly given the Chair because they couldn't get a big name. Apparently approached prior to the press release but unwilling or unable to take on the job – which necessitates two weeks of pretty intensive work – were Donald Sutherland, Stephen Frears and Italian theatre and opera director Giorgio Strehler.

Still, at least the Berlin organisers didn't have to change their dates – which is what has just happened to Venice. Towards the end of last year, there was a high-profile announcement to the effect that the 1995 Mostra would be held later than usual – 5-16 September – so as not to clash with Montreal (and so, I might add, as to completely bugger up San Sebastian).

Alas this brave move will now not take place: the 1995 Venice Film Festival will run from 30 August-9 September – the same slot as usual. And the reason? "The decision to bring forward the event," said a statement by Festival director Gillo Pontecorvo, "is due to organisational problems beyond the control of the Biennale. The availability of the facilities could not be guaranteed for the dates we had previously set."

Which sounds to me like a long-winded way of saying, "the hall was already booked".

● It's not just British television that thinks Ruth Rendell is Britain's answer to Raymond Chandler – with all the adjustments in social milieu that that implies, of course.

Claude Chabrol is evidently a fan, too, since he started work in mid-January on *La Cérémonie*, based on Rendell's 1977 novel *A Judgement in Stone*. Glowingly described by *Le Film Français* as "the most impressive,



Chairing Berlin: Lia van Leer

cruellest and most original work ever produced by a writer of crime fiction" (one assumes they're quoting the press release), *La Cérémonie* began production in Brittany, where Chabrol has made some of his finest thrillers – notably *Que la bête meure* – on 16 January.

Mind you, if *Le Film Français* had wanted to use the word "impressive", they could have applied it to *La Cérémonie*'s cast, which includes Isabelle Huppert, Sandrine Bonnaire, Jacqueline Bisset, Jean-Pierre Cassel and Virginie Ledoyen (who was to have played the lead in Marcel Carné's much-postponed and now presumably defunct swan song, *Mouche*).

It is some time since this column was able to report on the movements of Menahem Golan, head of Cannon Pictures, and briefly chief of

MGM-Pathé, then founder of 21st Century Film Corporation, followed by International Dynamic Pictures, until an exit one step ahead of the Los Angeles County bailiffs. I bet you've been wondering what became of him.

Well, Menahem – last spotted trying to sign up directors at the Berlin Film Festival in 1994 – has re-emerged back in Israel. His newest company, called Jaffa-Tel Aviv Film and TV Productions, is backed by "a group of investors" and has plans to make three films in the coming year.

Golan-watchers will note that the only new thing about the latest announcement is the name and the projected volume – how come only three films, Menahem?

● Finally, after my flip remarks about presidential biopics (Anthony Hopkins, by the way, looks most likely to play Nixon, if Oliver Stone can stop squabbling with the producer) and especially the ones about what LBJ did or didn't do on Air Force One on the way back from Dallas (S&S February), I am much encouraged to read that Castle Rock has gone right ahead and optioned Robert Caro's LBJ biography, *Means of Ascent*, for producer Fred Zollo (*Mississippi Burning*, *Quiz Show*). Could it be that the business reads *The business*?

BERLIN NOTES

A few sparks of flair

The Berlin Film Festival offered two touchstones for the cinema in its centenary year:

1. The festival opened with a brilliant digital reconstruction of the films that Max and Emil Skladanowsky presented at the Berlin Wintergarten on 1 November 1895, nearly two months before the first Lumière Brothers show in Paris. The programme comprises simple documentary records of nine variety-show turns: Italian and Russian dances, acrobats, a juggler, a boxing kangaroo. One shot in particular, of a woman swirling in tent-like robes, was regenerated in the computer on the basis of a few surviving frames. Aside from proving that archival reconstruction has now overtaken the level of technical ingenuity found in movies like *Terminator 2*, the Skladanowsky programme reminds us how much cinema has always been filmed theatre... not to mention that what we're celebrating in 1995 is not the 'invention' of cinema but merely the centenary of its commercial exploitation.

2. Speaking at the packed press conference for the Wayne Wang/Paul Auster diptych *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face*, a Miramax executive congratulated himself and his hired talent on having made two films

closer to the indie scene than to Hollywood. Harvey Keitel, sitting next to him, was moved to comment: "If we're gonna talk about 'independent film-making', then maybe it's time we stopped using the word 'stars'." This prompted wild applause from the hundreds of journalists clambering for a view of Keitel and William Hurt.

Smoke, which has a lot of post-modernist fun with the conventions of storytelling, is actually a superior example of filmed theatre: a Brooklyn miniature about five intersecting lives in which the weeks of pre-production rehearsals are always right up there on the screen. The spontaneity that it lacks, however, overflows through *Blue in the Face*, which was knocked off in a week after *Smoke* finished shooting. In the ancillary film Keitel repeats his role as the manager of a cornerstore/ tobacconist who sells under-the-counter Cuban cigars and whose shop becomes the centre of the Brooklyn universe, hosting improvisations (guided by Wang and Auster) from such guests as Roseanne, Jim Jarmusch, Michael J. Fox and an unrecognisable Lily Tomlin. *Blue in the Face* has the disadvantage that it needs to follow *Smoke* to make much sense, but it's much the more interesting and unpredictable movie.

But nothing in the festival provoked



much excitement this year; even the Eastern selections, generally the first place to look for something more engaging than exercises in style and games with genre, lacked fire. The most achieved, by far, was Im Kwon-Taek's follow-up to *Sopyonje*, an epic saga which takes advantage of newly relaxed censorship to describe the crushing of the South Korean Left in the years before the Korean War. This is called *The Taebaek Mountains*, and it succeeds, as no other film I can think of, in dramatising ideological questions by relating them intimately to other questions – emotional, sexual, economic and social. Needless to say, it was ignored by a jury which

thought that Bertrand Tavernier's redundant shot at a 'blank generation' movie *Fresh Bait* was the best film in sight, and that Richard Linklater is a better director than Im Kwon-Taek. The only spark of flair in the prize list was the citing of Hong Kong's veteran comedienne Josephine Siao as Best Actress for her role as a middle-aged woman coping with a senile father-in-law in Ann Hui's lightweight *Summer Snow* (Nüren Sishi).

Two small independent movies not financed by Miramax offered substantial pleasures. Riju Go's *Elephant Song*, made for the Japanese satellite station Wowow, is a one-hour film about a waitress's funny and sad attempts to honour the last wish of one of her customers, that his corpse be returned to the land rather than coffined or cremated. This latter-day footnote to *The Ballad of Narayama* is unsentimental, emotionally complex and very well acted. And Kal Ng's *The Soul Investigator*, a low-budget first feature made in Toronto, reverses all the clichés of overseas Chinese filmmaking by phrasing its attack on Confucian values as a mysterious spiritual quest: a stylised and highly original pattern of dreams. Both films prove that there are still a few places immune from high-tech visuals and reliance on theatre. Tony Rayns

'Death and the Maiden' is Roman Polanski's latest film in a long career that includes 'Cul-de-Sac' and 'Chinatown'. He talks with David Thompson

I MAKE FILMS FOR ADULTS

● There are three characters – two of them a married couple, the other an outsider – in an isolated dwelling by the sea: it could be *Cul-de-Sac*, the 1966 film Roman Polanski has often cited as his best, when the setting was the castle on Holy Island, the unlikely couple Donald Pleasence and a coquettish Françoise Dorléac and the outsider Lionel Stander, growling like a Hollywood gangster in a B-movie plot. But it is also the dramatic situation in Polanski's adaptation of Ariel Dorfman's much-vaunted recent play about the legacy of political torture, *Death and the Maiden*. Now the setting is a South American country just after the fall of a dictatorship (a thinly-disguised Chile), and the house a remote bungalow on the edge of a cliff subject to a storm-induced powercut. A tense confrontation takes place between Gerardo, a high ranking government official, his wife Paulina, formerly the victim of torture under the dictatorship, and a stranger, Dr Roberto Miranda, who has given the husband a lift home and may or may not be the man who raped the wife when she was incarcerated, blindfolded, and subjected to horrific burns and electric shocks. This is hardly the stuff of humour, though Mike Nichols apparently directed it as an absurdist comedy on Broadway. But Polanski is not above injecting the odd unnerving moment, when Paulina's outrageous behaviour – gagging and threatening with a gun an outwardly beneficent stranger because she recognises his voice – becomes too much for her anxiously liberal husband. But if the tone of the proceedings is necessarily more serious and more intense than might be expected from his earlier films, it should be remembered that the best of Polanski's work has always featured surprises, and unsettling shifts in tone.

In adapting Dorfman (working with the playwright himself and also Rafael Yglesias, the writer of *Fearless*) Polanski has pruned much of the original's earnest speechifying to focus in



on the visceral impact of the situation. The single basic location is the same, but the time structure has been tightened and the suspense increased: the director's familiar attention to detail in sound and composition keeps the tension at a high level. He has even added a familiar Polanski trademark, a telephone conversation (in this case to establish the outsider's alibi as a doctor at work in Barcelona at the time of the alleged tortures) that explores all the exasperating problems of establishing contact with persons unseen. But then he has always shown an acute understanding of a world in which bureaucrats cannot be believed, reasonable requests of human behaviour easily slip into threatening gestures, and nothing and nobody is wholly innocent. He may have always denied such suggestions himself, but his own experiences – as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Poland, as the husband of a Manson murder victim, as the subject of an unresolved sex scandal – surely offer considerable insight into lives dominated by suffering and vengeance.

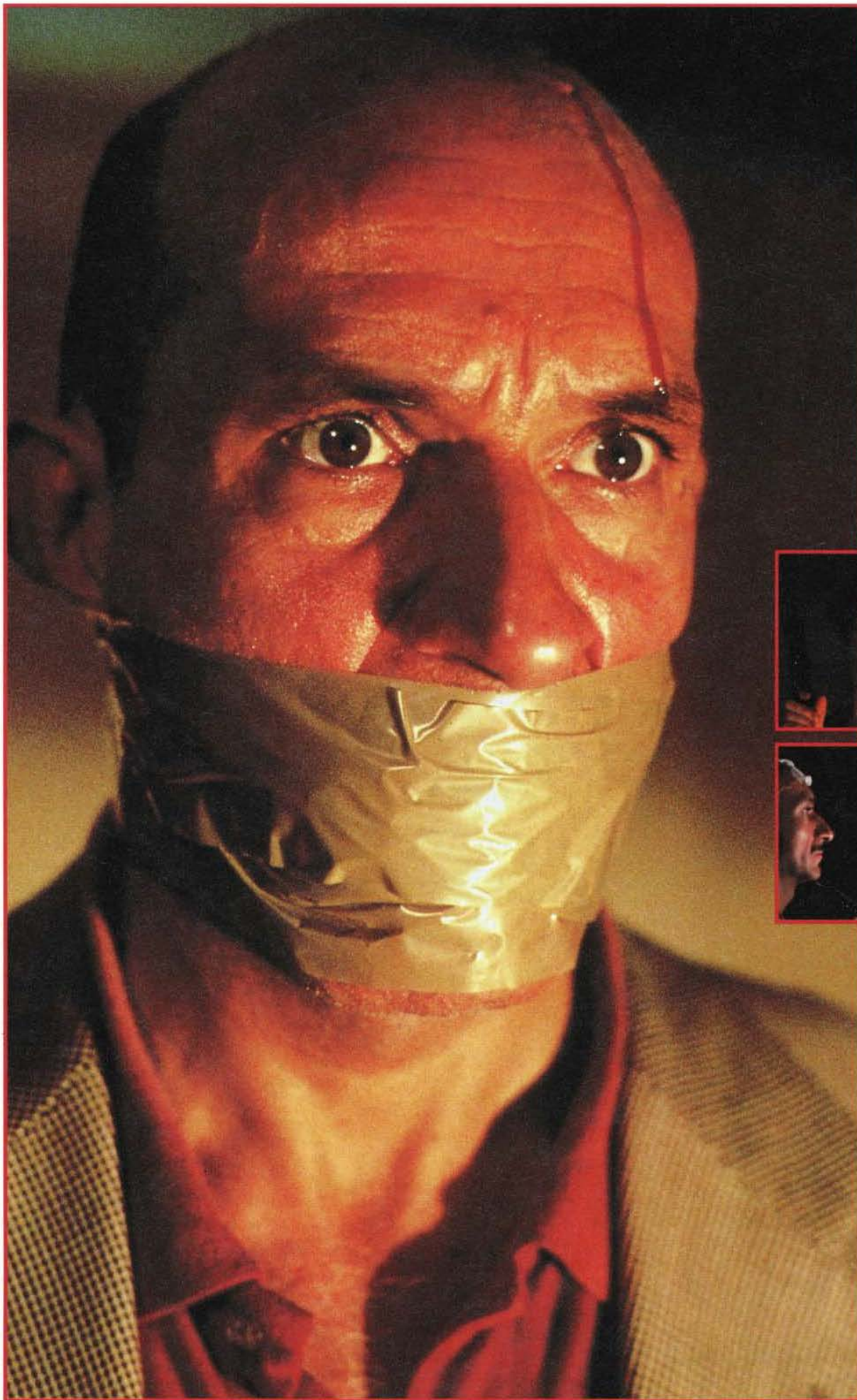
Thanks to his casting, Polanski has benefited from a persuasively febrile performance by Sigourney Weaver as Paulina, while Stuart Wilson gives unobtrusive dignity to the role of Ger-

ardo, a character who could easily disappear amidst the fireworks. As the ambiguous Miranda, Ben Kingsley is suitably unknowable, slipping disquietingly from bore to boor as his trial at gun point drains him of patience (what's more, his bald pate and occasional air of weary dementia evoke something of Pleasence's performance in *Cul-de-Sac*). *Death and the Maiden* – like *Bitter Moon*, shot by the estimable Tonino delli Colli – was mainly filmed on a sound stage in Paris but tellingly uses one exterior (in Spain) where a perilous cliff edge is the setting for the possible resolution to the drama. And the whole is framed by a concert attended by the protagonists, where Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' string quartet is played, the music which once accompanied the sessions of Paulina and her mystery torturer. It may be Polanski's least showy film, but by drawing out the play's strengths as drama and potential as cinema, he shows his artistic grip has not slackened.

To ask Polanski to explain his art anew is another matter. Early on in a lavishly illustrated French volume entitled *Polanski par Polanski*, he stated his position very clearly: "Don't ask me why I make 'these' films. I am just a director." He later adds: "I've never given a good interview in my life, and I've given hundreds." Readers of his autobiography will know well his determinedly dispassionate tone of speech. Perhaps it's all part of steeling himself against the many vicissitudes that life has already dealt him. Perhaps it's also, quite genuinely, a case of the director really not having to think like a critic, and preferring to retain an innocence with regard to the "whys" of his profession.

Thompson: How did you become involved in making the film version of 'Death and the Maiden'?

Polanski: I was going to direct the play myself in Paris, and then I decided against it, since I was also going to make the film, and I was afraid I might get sick and tired of it before I stepped onto the studio floor. I never saw any of the ►



The avenger's tragedy:
Ben Kingsley as Robert
Miranda, the tormenter who
is tortured, immediate left;
Roman Polanski, far left;
Sigourney Weaver as Paulina,
the former victim, below;
Paulina and Roberto
face-to-face, bottom



◀ productions, not even on tape. I was simply sent the play by the producers [Thom Mount and Bonnie Timmermann], and then I read it. So it was all very prosaic! They were interested in me filming it.

Did you immediately have an idea of how you would adapt it for the screen?

I didn't know exactly what to do, but I had a clear idea that something was amiss with the end of the play. I felt there was no third act, and I knew that would have to be fixed.

In the play, we only hear one confession by Roberto. You have split it into two: one abortive version conducted for a video camera, and then his final and possibly true confession on the cliff edge. Why did you do it in this way?

The first on tape is phoney, as Paulina says. So it is followed by a real confession. In the play, he never gives a real confession; it just sort of stops suddenly, and then comes the epilogue, which is a very theatrical device, very *déjà vu*, of a mirror coming down reflecting the audience. Then we see the husband and wife and the doctor in the first row at the concert noticing each other. It just makes us aware of the fact they have to brush elbows in the future, which is an important element, but does not satisfy the viewer as far as the plot development is concerned. It doesn't give an answer to a whodunnit, which the play seems to be for its first three quarters. **The setting for that final confession on the cliff edge is very effective. There's a particularly unsettling camera move – apparently from Roberto's point of view – over the edge, at the end of the scene.**

The idea for the setting came from discussions at the script stage. The final shot looking over the cliff came to me at the location. It was actually a shot to be used somewhere else, when Gerardo was holding him over the edge. In the editing, I felt it would be better at the end.

Many people I have spoken to think that this very dramatic confession makes him appear guilty.

In the play, he's definitely guilty, I think. It gives an answer, but then somehow it doesn't manage to give an answer. It's ambiguous, and it seems to me to a certain extent to be a cop-out. But I think we managed to make it more satisfying. We can accept the version that he is lying to the last moment, because a man who is fighting for his life could very easily come up with a convincing confession. When you're standing on the edge of a cliff, all kind of hidden talents may surface! We shot a number of slightly different readings, five or six.

This appears to be the first time in your career in which you've made a film with a specific political context.

It's depends what you mean by political. In my mind, "political" relates to a concrete regime, and names, of a country at least, let alone the people. In *Death and the Maiden* I never mention any political leader or a concrete dictatorship that's fallen. I'm talking about an unspecified country in South America. And it's more universal than that, because this sort of situation occurs all around the globe, where former victims are faced with their former oppressors or torturers. They have to live through these kind of encounters and deal with them.

You've often said that when you were at the Lodz film school, you were bored by the constant reference to politics in cinema.

In discussions, I was much more concerned

with aesthetics. I understood that form is much more important than content. But I remember when Zbigniew Cybulski, who was a close friend, brought us a bunch of badly-made, out-of-focus and grainy porno movies, we were all a great audience for this despite the fact they were terrible. So after all the content is important... [laughs] But at that time, the form mattered to me more than anything, and still does even now.

On stage, 'Death and the Maiden' takes place over a night and a day. You have reduced the time scale considerably.

I compressed it into one night. I like the three unities of action, place and time. In particular time. This type of form, the *huis clos* [the drama in the single enclosed room], must come from the nostalgia I continue to have for one of the first films that impressed me, Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* (1947). It starts, I believe, in the morning with the characters plotting in the apartment, and it ends I think by night or early morning. And there's this clock constantly in shot. It's a wonderful picture, and I think I'm here today because of it, and Olivier's *Hamlet*. **Both these films achieve a great deal through the use of black and white cinematography. Would you ever return to using it yourself?**

I think making films in black and white today is a form of stylisation. I have nothing against it, but there should be a real reason for it. I think *Schindler's List* was very well done in black and white, because our memories of the period are



The camera starts over her shoulder on him, because I wanted this feeling of her dominating him, and ends up looking up at her

associated with black and white, in particular through newsreels.

Another two films you have often said were a great influence on you are 'Citizen Kane' and 'Rashomon'. Since both deal with the problem of discovering a truth through multiple viewpoints, could they be said to have influenced your interest in 'Death and the Maiden'?

Yes, they do have some bearing on *Death* because they deal with the aspect that I find the most interesting in this play, which is the relativity of truth. To have the same story told, or the same event related by various people, or various parties, these different point of views which don't concord, that always fascinated me. And

this is as close to it as I could get. I hope I will have another crack at it sometime, somewhere, really doing a film with the event seen through different eyes, as in *Rashomon*. I think it's a fantastic idea that only a movie can express; no other medium is better for this type of treatment than film.

Some of your films, such as 'Repulsion', 'Rosemary's Baby' and 'Chinatown', rely heavily on one protagonist's point of view. Do you feel a special identification with any of the characters in 'Death and the Maiden'?

Death and the Maiden was not suited to a subjective narrative. There are three characters, and you have to alternate as far as your identification goes. Therefore you mustn't tell the story from the point of view of Paulina, for example. Yet most of the time we're closer to her than anyone else. But if you look at the structure of the play, it has a very funny plan, like a musical form. First Paulina solo, then three duets – Paulina with husband, husband with doctor, doctor with Paulina – and then you have them all three together, the *tutti*. So you need some symmetry also in the way you film it, and therefore I avoided being too much behind or over Paulina's shoulder. I had to be over everybody's shoulder.

Just after Paulina has been tripped by Roberto, there's a particularly strong camera movement as she holds the gun to his face that serves to define their relationship.

The camera starts over her shoulder on him, because I wanted this feeling of her dominating him, and ends up looking up at her. It's more expressive than what has gone before because this time I have a reason for it, as the action becomes more violent.

Before that, when she ties him up, you use some very telling close-ups of their physical intimacy.

Well, that came simply from rehearsal. I watched how she did it, and it seemed to me the most effective way to film it.

A number of people have suggested to me that when she uses her panties to gag him, the idea must have come from you, yet it's in the play! On the other hand, the storm and the blackout – which might appear to be 'theatrical' devices – are not.

These ideas came up at script level. We needed some intensity, and a reason for the isolation. I wanted to feel the world outside, through the changes in weather and time. We're near the sea so we have to feel that. I thought the storm was a good way to begin this type of atmosphere.

The word "atmosphere" comes up a lot in discussions of film-making.

It's the most important thing for me in cinema. Without it, it's all dialogue or movement.

The setting of the play seems almost tailor-made, for you, in that so many of your films – 'Knife in the Water' and 'Cul-de-Sac', for example – deal with characters in an enclosed space surrounded by wide open space.

I use all these devices so that you feel this isolation. I like to use all the devices that are at my disposal in a movie to get away from the stage. Cinema gives you the chance of making a play into something that is real, and not stagy, so that it's like life. You have a fourth wall in cinema, which you don't have on stage. You have the weather around you, the night or the sun, you can step out of the door even if you don't want to "open it up" as they say.

Presumably by working mainly on a sound stage, you have had much greater control over your conception of the film than when you shoot on location.

By the time I start photography, I have worked on the script so much and for so long that I have the entire vision of the film in my head, but when I'm confronted with the reality it undergoes an immediate change. Often you have to modify it. For example, on *Bitter Moon*, the final scene in the script had the concept of a rising sun over Istanbul. I didn't just put "rising sun" arbitrarily in the script, and I was convinced we would have it when we reached Istanbul. But it was all misty and rainy, so I had to figure out a way of adjusting things, because it completely changed the atmosphere of the scene.

'Bitter Moon' had a very divided reception. Were you deliberately seeking a certain "shock" factor after the films immediately preceding it?

I wasn't making it to shock. Maybe I had a little bit of this desire when I was young. Young people are of course rebellious and they like shocking others, and they have to act through what the French call *s'imposer*, which means to establish themselves and force themselves upon their surroundings. I don't have any of those needs now, and even when I was beginning, the main thing for me was to tell the story, and if the story required violent images or nudity, I would use them for telling it.

Unlike the novel it was based on, 'Bitter Moon' was particularly striking for the clash of nationalities among the characters – especially the very British young couple.

I wanted them to be very British. Originally, I thought the man would be a schoolmaster, and it was when I started discussing the role with Hugh Grant that he suggested it would be better if he was a fellow from the city, an English yuppie. I remember when I was shooting in England once, an electrician shouted to his colleague, "Hey mate, don't run, be British." That wasn't exactly the type I was thinking of, the character was a bit higher in class, but still "British". One who doesn't run.

'Bitter Moon' had as its concern power games between characters, as in a way does 'Death and the Maiden'. Is this what makes a "Polanski" film for you?

When I make a horror picture, they say it's typical Polanski. When I make a film which shows any form of violence, they tell me it's typical Polanski. I truly don't analyse these things. I'm not even interested to do so. I make films I feel like making at a given time in the same way you feel like ordering a steak one day and spaghetti another. The reason behind it, I don't know; it's an accumulation of experience and your mood in that period of your life, and of course the other elements, such as the whole question of whether a film can be financed.

You made relatively few films in the 80s. Why?

I was so traumatised by the experience of *Tess* I just didn't want to make films anymore. It was such an enormous effort to make and so difficult to finish that I started asking myself whether it was worth it or not. After completing the film, there was a year of fighting to get it distributed – in England the Rank Organisation said it would be "over my dead body", that nobody wanted to see a two-and-a-half-hour costume drama. Finally when it was clear that the film was a success, with excellent reviews.

I thought, what if the film had been a total failure? So I decided to do theatre and other things, and for eight years didn't make a movie.

You came back with 'Pirates' which was neither a commercial nor critical success. What went wrong?

Pirates was an old project that I had wanted to do ten years before, and it was a mistake to fight for the film, because I had to make too many compromises – I had to chop the script, and to



A man who is fighting for his life could very easily come up with a convincing confession

cast it a way I didn't want to. And after slaving away for 25 or 28 weeks shooting *Pirates* in the Mediterranean and Tunisia with a multinational crew who couldn't understand one another and not enough money and all kinds of natural difficulties such as bad weather – or even good weather when I didn't need it – then of course I felt like making a simple film without complicated sets and costumes, preferably without costumes and sets at all! Anything on which I could keep a view of the entire piece and not just little moments, because *Pirates* was shot without any continuity, and every shot was like tearing a fish out of a shark's mouth. I didn't want to go through a similar experience, so I made *Frantic*.

'Frantic' was made for Warner Bros. Was there much studio interference – the casting for example?

As far as Harrison Ford was concerned, he was my proposition. But I did find the studios had changed since I left Hollywood and that they now interfere much more. They believe they also have creative ideas and they desperately want a commercial success and think they know how to have one. They wanted me to change the ending, and I did have to reshoot certain things. I could have dug my heels in and said no, but the film has to be released, you have to have their co-operation and enthusiasm behind it, so I had to give up on certain issues.

Did making a more obviously commercial film strengthen your position?

After *Frantic* I got a little more brazen and I tried to make a film that was more complex, from one of my beloved books, Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. I spent a lot of time writing the script, and then I realised it was difficult to finance, so I decided to have a go at something easy again, and together with the producer

Alain Sarde we came upon the novel *Bitter Moon*. I didn't have much money so we worked hard and were under tremendous pressure, but I did what I wanted and nobody interfered with the result. Also I managed to contain it within a year and a half; when I was beginning, you could do a film in a year, now you're lucky if you make one in two years.

In your planning of a film do you use storyboards at all?

When I was at film school, and even for a short period after, I used to use storyboards. Since I'd studied art, it was easy for me to draw, and this was a simple way for me to present to others what I wanted to see, rather than explain it with words. Soon I realised this was not the right approach, like tailoring a perfect suit and looking for a person to fit it. I prefer to find a person first and then make a suit for him. So I stopped doing these storyboards, and I understood that my inspiration came from actors, letting them rehearse and seeing that instinctively they find the right places, the right attitudes, the right readings and the right body language. And when it's not right, one sees it immediately because it looks false. So I try to help so it looks more real, and only then do I start thinking of filming it, deciding when and how I'm going to place the camera.

And how do you decide upon that? Part of your style seems to be fondness for wide-angle lenses and a fluid intimate camera.

I'm trying to show on the screen what I see, it's as simple as that. I'm trying only to repeat with the camera as closely as possible what I have seen with my own eyes during the rehearsal of a set-up. Therefore I use the appropriate angle. The angle is determined by the distance from which I watch the person. The face seen from the other side of the room is not the same face which is seen across a table. Unfortunately, I've met very few people who understand this method. There is a general policy accepted in the world of cinema and photography that the angle changes the perspective, and that a wide angle distorts. A wide angle distorts only inasmuch as you put the three-dimensional world onto the two dimensional screen. Looking at you across this table, if I continue to widen the angle, I start seeing what's behind your ears. It's like a ball, and if you project it inside another ball, it would not be distorted – as with Omnimax, in which the image is projected on a concave surface. At the edges, a wide angle will cause the lines to curve, but the centre will not be distorted – or only if you come very close to a subject. At a distance of two metres, your face would not be distorted. So it's not the angle that changes the perspective, but the distance.

In a number of your films, such as 'Repulsion' or 'The Tenant', you use the effect of a wide angle lens in close to convey the growing madness of the characters, with the world drawing in on them.

When you make a close-up of a person, to determine the size you have two options. Close with a wide angle, or far away with a narrow angle or a long focal length. The result is not the same. I choose to use wide angles whenever I want to be aware of the walls around, where I want it to be more three-dimensional. They give a greater sense of a location, and a greater depth of focus.

Would you ever use two cameras on a scene?

◀ I think there is only one good angle. I only use two cameras out of necessity, such as in *Death and the Maiden* when the car goes over the cliff, as I only had one chance to shoot the scene! Also for the scene when Paulina drags Roberto out of the house, and those on the cliff edge, I had very little time to shoot because of the weather, so I set up three cameras in advance not to waste time between takes.

This method suggests you don't do a lot of coverage to give yourself a variety of options.

Of course I don't shoot just what you finally see in the film. I am covering myself by making the takes long, and even doing close-ups, as I can never be exactly sure of how it will work in the editing. But my former editor Sam O'Steen used to say he could easily assemble the scenes without me, because my way of shooting made it clear which shots to use.

An actor recently complained to me that too many directors today only watch their video monitor, and spend very little time directing them on the set.

I didn't use a monitor until *Frantic*. The monitor is useful as far as the framing is concerned, and it helps to show whether the actors are in the right position, but it's a dangerous toy, because you can't see the detail you will later see on the screen, the emotions that the actors are conveying through their eyes. Therefore I keep fighting the desire of looking after the composition rather than looking after the performance.

On set, you certainly spend a lot of time over the detail of the performances, and watch them very closely.

Well, of course you must be there for the actors. I know that from my own experience as an actor. I could feel in the theatre if there was someone with malevolent feelings towards me in the audience, and it affected my performance. On the other hand, if I knew someone sympathetic to me was sitting there, I would act for them, and my performance would be better.

Some actors have said they were surprised by how much you gave them in the way of line readings and gestures.

I think that is what a director should be doing,

and it certainly always used to be the way. There are some actors to whom you can show what you want from them, and I use it very often because it's a short cut, it's faster than giving a verbal explanation. Other actors require a more delicate approach, just a suggestion of what you are after. As far as the actors on *Death and the Maiden* were concerned, this film was the smoothest time I've had.

Was Sigourney Weaver your first choice for Paulina?

Yes, she was the first choice, and the problem at first was working out a combination of actors according to when she was available. She was interested in the part, and I was happy that someone like her who was personally engaged in the concerns of this subject be involved. Of course she wasn't the obvious choice, she's so physically strong compared to, say, Juliet Stevenson, who played the part on stage in London. But I liked that; sometimes not choosing the obvious person works well, and of course we also had to have a name that was known.

ROMAN POLANSKI

BORN PARIS, 18.8.1933

Student films

According to various conflicting sources, Polanski made up to six films while at Lodz Film School. These include 'Rower' ('The Bicycle', 1955); the documentary 'Rozbijemy Zabwe' ('Break up the Party; Break up the Dance', 1957); and 'Lampa' ('The Lamp', 1959). Details are confused and rarely verifiable. However, two films made by Polanski at Lodz – 'Dwaj Ludzie z Szafa' and 'Gdy Spadaja Anilye Anioly' – are well-documented. (Unless otherwise noted, all comments are from Polanski's autobiography 'Roman, by Polanski'.) On 'Rozbijemy Zabwe': "I organised an open-air dance in the school grounds. My fellow students thought I was going to film them having a good time; only the camera crew knew different. Contacting a well-known group of hooligans, I invited them to arrive halfway through and do their stuff... It wasn't the teachers as much as the students who were furious with me afterwards."

FILMS DIRECTED BY POLANSKI

1957

DWAJ LUDZIE Z SZAFĄ (TWO MEN AND A WARDROBE)

Poland/15 minutes

Production Company:

Film Polski/Film High School

Screenplay: Andrzej Kostenko,

Ryszard Barski

Polanski also edited the film

"Little by little my principals got sick of toting a wardrobe around... Henryk complained that the beard I'd made him grow was blighting his love life. I watched while Kuba – who happened to be shaving himself at the time – transferred some lather to Henryk's face. Then, to my horror,

he actually shaved a couple of inches off one cheek. I shook him till his teeth rattled and swore I'd strangle him if he tried it again. As it was, we had to shoot it from one side only for several days to come."

1958

GDY SPADAJĄ ANILYI ANIOLY (aka GDY SPADAJĄ ANIOLY: WHEN [THE] ANGELS FALL: BRACIA KŁOZETOWA, THE LADY LAVATORY ATTENDANT)

Poland/20 minutes

Production Company:

Film Polski/Film High School

"The idea stemmed from a short story in a newspaper about an elderly attendant in a public lavatory who has a mystical vision. To me, a lavatory attendant's life seemed to epitomise vacuity, drudgery, monotony. Nobody would ever look at an old crone in a public lavatory, with her pathetic saucerful of coins and her vacant, impersonal air, and conceive of her having had a life imbued with passion and drama."

1961

LE GROS ET LE MAIGRE (THE FAT AND THE LEAN)

France/16 minutes

Co-director: Jean-Pierre Rousseau

Producer: Claude Joudioux

Polanski plays 'the lean man'

"One casting problem remained. A goat played a prominent part in the action, but animal-renting outfits were prohibitively expensive. One day... we came across a flock of goats whose owner made cheeses and hawked them around the neighborhood. We hired one of his animals, which, though cheap, turned out to have very little camera sense."

1962

LES PLUS BELLE DES ESCROQUERIES DU MONDE (aka LE GRAND ESCROC; THE BEST SWINDLES IN THE WORLD)

France/Italy/Japan/90 minutes



Repulsion

Directors: Jean-Luc Godard, Hiromichi Horikawa, Ugo Grigoretti, Claude Chabrol, Roman Polanski
Polanski's contribution is 'La Rivière des diamants' ('A River of Diamonds').

1962

NOZ W WODZIE (KNIFE IN THE WATER)

Poland/94 minutes

Producer: Stanisław Zylewicz

Screenplay: Jerzy Skolimowski,

Jakub Goldberg, Roman Polanski

"[It] was all landscapes and Polish lakes, but the action was placed on a small yacht, so it was confined after all... When I was young, films with thousands of soldiers running in all directions never excited me. It was rather a room, a cabin, a ship."

1962

SSAKI (MAMMALS)

Poland/10 minutes

Production Company:

Se-Ma-For/Film Polski

Screenplay: Andrzej Kondratiuk,

Roman Polanski

"For all his amateur status, though, [Michael Zolnierkiewicz] was as hard to handle as any temperamental superstar. He suffered from hallucinations brought on by an inordinate sex drive. 'Hey!' he'd say, pointing to a figure on the horizon. 'Just look at that fantastic chick!' It was the

postman, trudging towards us through the snow...."

1965

REPULSION

United Kingdom/104 minutes

Producer: Gene Gutowski

Screenplay: Roman Polanski,

Gérard Brach

Polanski is also credited as

'a spoon player'

"There were three murders, not two, in the original version. The jealous wife of the character played by Ian Hendry shows up at the apartment, convinced that her husband is there. Because she sees Colin's body in the bathtub, Carole kills her too. [Bronisław] Kaper sagely remarked that this murder was too rational to fit the psychological pattern, so I cut it out."

1966

CUL-DE-SAC

United Kingdom/111 minutes

Producer: Gene Gutowski

Screenplay: Roman Polanski,

Gérard Brach

"Lionel Stander showed up in a pink linen suit, his grey silk cravat held in place by a pearl black tiepin. Stander's angry bluster – 'This is a cravat, you silly little man! Cravats existed before ties were invented!' – failed to shake the Connaught's immutable ties-only rule."



Cut-de-Sac

1967

DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES (THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS OR PARDON ME, BUT YOUR TEETH ARE IN MY NECK)

United Kingdom/107 minutes

Producer: Gene Gutowski

Screenplay: Gérard Brach,

Roman Polanski

Polanski appears as 'Alfred'

"Pages 75-6 – It is quite obvious that Herbert is to be characterised as a homosexual. We do not object to this fact, but do ask that you avoid any physical advances on his part toward Alfred. This would refer to any embracing or fondling, while his attack as a vampire would not prove objectionable" [from an MGM memo].

1968

ROSEMARY'S BABY

USA/137 minutes

Producer: William Castle

Screenplay: Roman Polanski,

based on the novel by Ira Levin

"When I suggested that Vidal Sassoon himself should come to Hollywood to cut Mia's hair, Bill Castle decided to hype the occasion into a spectacular 'photo opportunity' for the Hollywood press. Bleachers were set up on a sound stage, and there, in front of photographers and TV crews, Vidal Sassoon removed Mia's locks. Throughout, like the true hippie she was, Mia kept up a verbal assault on the press for covering such a minor function instead of applying their investigative energies to the plight of deprived and underprivileged American Indians."

1971

MACBETH

United Kingdom/140 minutes

Producer: Andrew Brunsberg

Screenplay: Roman Polanski,

Kenneth Tynan

"The moment in Act IV when the murderers dispatched by Macbeth

Despite the fact that you began film-making at the time of the Nouvelle Vague, you always seemed to have worked to a very precise script.

The script is essential. Film-making is too complicated to leave things for improvisation, that's just for amateurs. How can you improvise when you need specific props for a scene, or you have to work on a specific location? When I go on the floor of the studio, I have no time to think of what's wrong or right. It has to be already down there so when I'm lost I can pick up the script, open it and look at it like a book of instructions.

But isn't it true that you did not have an ending for 'Chinatown' until very late in the day?

I had neither the ending nor the love scene when we started shooting. Robert Towne never wanted the main characters to go to bed, and he didn't want her to die in the end. We had a hard time agreeing on that ending. Working on this script was so difficult and gruelling that we started shooting before the script was redrafted.

In the first two drafts, the culprit Noah Cross was caught. In the second draft, he was even killed inside a huge fish, which was a sign! But beginning shooting in this way was only possible because Robert Evans was producer of the film and at the same time head of the studio, so he could give us the green light. Finally he said, "Come on Roman, we have to have an ending!" There were very few scenes left to shoot. It all became very dodgy. I had always worried about there being no scene in *Chinatown* to justify the title, and since *Chinatown* in Los Angeles no longer exists, I got Richard Sylbert to build this set for me. I asked Jack [Nicholson] to help come up with some lines - he's very good at that - and so we shot it with her death.

I read that when you were writing 'What?' with Gérard Brach, you listened to Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' over 30 times! Is it sheer coincidence that this music has turned up in two of your films?

No connection. Except that I regret having used it on *What?*. I think it would have been a better

film if we'd have more joyful music. It's beautiful music, but tremendously melancholy.

It was recently suggested that your next project might be an adaptation of 'Les Misérables'.

It's one of the projects I'm discussing right now, but the press moved faster than the people involved. Certainly after *Death and the Maiden*, I would like to make a bigger picture.

There was also an announcement that you might be making an animated erotic thriller, based on the work of the cult Italian comic-strip artist, Milo Manara.

I've always been interested in animation, but I've never been able to do it. So when they asked me to so to speak 'direct' an animation film, I was very interested. I'd be supervising the whole process from the script to the final mix, except you have no actors! Manara makes very erotic and funny comic strips. It's an adult animation. Well, as you may have noticed, I make films for adults!

'Death and the Maiden' opens on 28 April and is reviewed on page 40 of this issue.



Macbeth

burst in on Lady Macduff and her small son... was based on a childhood experience. I suddenly recalled how the SS officer had searched our room in the ghetto, swishing his riding crop to and fro, toying with my teddy bear, nonchalantly emptying out the hatbox full of forbidden bread. The behaviour of Macbeth's henchmen was inspired by that recollection."

1972
CHE? (aka WHAT?: FORBIDDEN DREAMS)
Italy/France/Denmark/113 minutes
Producer: Carol Ponti
Screenplay: Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski
Polanski also appears as 'Mosquito'

1974
CHINATOWN
USA/131 minutes
Producer: Robert Evans
Screenplay: Robert Towne
Polanski also appears as 'the man with the knife'
"Hollywood likes to tease the audience, but the hero always comes along at the end and kills the bad guy. It's not that way, and I didn't want to film it that way."
(*'Close-Up: The Contemporary Director'*, edited by John Tushka)

1976
LE LOCATAIRE (THE TENANT)
France/126 minutes
Producer: Andrew Braunsberg
Screenplay: Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski
Polanski also appears as 'Trelkovski'
"He is made to feel an outsider. He may be a French citizen, but he is not French. And his mind - he is beginning to lose his mind."
(*'Close-up: The Contemporary Director'*)
"Didier Lavergne, the makeup artist, and Ludovic Paris, our hairdresser, were wonderful craftsmen. Since I was in drag for part of the film, they had to be. They also happened to be a remarkably good-looking pair - so much so that Shelley Winters couldn't get over it. 'Look at those two guys and look at us,' she said, hooting with laughter. 'What's wrong with movies today? They're the ones who should be out in front of the camera, not us.'"

1979
TESS
France/180 minutes
Producer: Claude Berri
Screenplay: Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski, John Brownjohn
"The crossroads were just outside a village called Omonville-la-Rogue, and we made a deal with the mayor to use the local football field as the village green. We needed to return to this location several times, however, and the mayor's undertaking to us landed him in



Chinatown

serious trouble with the village. The football field issue, coupled with the fact that we had to mask the local team's changing room with a plywood representation of a Dorset village, complete with a church and thatched cottages, developed into such a full-scale political row that he was forced to resign."

1986
PIRATES (THE PIRATE)
France/Tunisia/124 minutes
Producer: Tarak Ben Ammar
Screenplay: Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski



Tess

1988
FRANTIC
USA/120 minutes
Production Company: Mount Co./Warner Bros. Pictures
Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach

1991
LUNES DE FIEL (aka BITTER MOON: LA LUNE DE FIEL; GORZKIE GODY)
France/United Kingdom/139 minutes
Producer: Roman Polanski
Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach, John Brownjohn

1994
DEATH AND THE MAIDEN
USA/United Kingdom/France/103 minutes
Producers: Thom Mount/Josh Kramer
Screenplay: Ariel Dorfman, Rafael Yglesias

FILMS SCRIPTED BY POLANSKI

1963
AIMEZ-VOUS DES FEMMES? (DO YOU LIKE WOMEN?)
France/Italy/100 minutes
Producer: Pierre Kalfon
Director: Jean Léon
Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; based on the novel by Georges Badawil
"A chilling little comedy about a Parisian secret society dedicated to the consumption of female flesh. Our screenplay was amusing and there was a chance of my directing the picture. Unfortunately [the producers] thought it safer to use someone with new wave associations... The film sank without a trace."

FILMS PRODUCED BY POLANSKI

1969
A DAY AT THE BEACH
United Kingdom/USA/93 minutes
Director: Simon Hessler
Screenplay: Roman Polanski

1971
WEEKEND OF A CHAMPION (aka WEEK-END OF A CHAMPION; JACKIE STEWART: WEEKEND OF A CHAMPION)
United Kingdom/80 minutes
Director: Frank Simon



Pirates



Frantic

FILMS IN WHICH POLANSKI ACTED

1954
POKOLENIE (GENERATION)
Poland/90 minutes
Director: Andrzej Wajda
Polanski appears as 'Mundek'

1960
DO WIDZENIA DO JUTRA (SEE YOU TOMORROW)
Poland/85 minutes
Director: Janusz Morgenstern
Polanski appears as 'Romek'

1960
NIEWINNI CZARODZIEJE (INNOCENT SORCERERS)
Poland/86 minutes
Director: Andrzej Wajda
Polanski appears as 'Polo'

1969
THE MAGIC CHRISTIAN
United Kingdom/95 minutes
Director: Joe McGrath
Polanski appears as 'Man listening to Lady Singer'

1974
DRACULA CERCA SANGUE DI VERGINE E... MORI DI SETE!!! (aka DRACULA VUOLE VIVERE: CERCE SANGUE DI VERGINE!; BLOOD FOR DRACULA; ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA; ANDY WARHOL'S BLOOD FOR DRACULA)
Italy/France/103 minutes
Director: Paul Morrissey
Polanski appears as 'belligerent peasant'

(Compiled by Tim Johnson)

● There was a phrase in quite general use by male critics during the 50s and 60s to describe certain women writers (though not directors – but as far as I can remember only Agnès Varda had movies released back then). They were described as “man haters”. The phrase comes back to me because something similar is cropping up these days in articles written by women about film directors (still largely men). Settle down to a piece by a woman about Peckinpah, De Palma, Altman or Tarantino and you’re very likely to read that they “don’t like women”. (The language is slightly changed, but then women are different. They’re nicer, aren’t they?) “He doesn’t like women”: it’s a phrase that might be fine for dismissing a piece of work without merit or interest (though “crap” would do better, taking up minimal space and leaving room to write about other things). But unless the desire is to dismiss an entire body of work, it’s not a criticism that tells us very much or takes us very far.

Of all directors, Peckinpah is the least problematic: women are male accessories, pure and simple, sometimes allowing his men to feel a little sentimental (though they’re better at doing that with other men), but usually no more than flesh for consumption. Tarantino might be Peckinpah’s successor as regards his interest in women. De Palma and Altman come further along the line of complexity, directors whose women are at least sometimes given psychological and biological motivation and are gazed at with some thought by the camera.

Don’t misunderstand me: I’m not suggesting that these directors, and others, *do* like women, I’m writing from a feeling that most men find the idea of women alarming in some way or other – and that their films, books, the way they sell us cabbages, can’t help but reflect their ambivalence. To say that this is the case is to say nothing very remarkable – if used as a criticism in itself, it merely closes down further thought. Perhaps the real problem we have is that there are only two off-the-peg genders available for depiction (even allowing for alternative sexual choice), and that the relationship between them is inevitably suffused with the generalised tension which any paired oppositions must feel for one other. As a woman, I’m neither surprised nor necessarily personally offended by this state of affairs (though there are moments). Having acknowledged the inevitability, I reserve the right to be intrigued rather than outraged. In any case, it’s better for my health.

Roman Polanski’s view of women is nothing if not intriguing, ranging as it does from moments of remarkable sensitivity about their lives to pure and puerile pornographic depiction of their bodies. It’s probably the range of understanding most men experience internally, but Polanski lays it down on film for us all to see. It is Polanski who expresses most clearly the ambiguity of his feelings – empathy and disgust – for the other sex. For this, at least, he deserves serious attention.

And in this respect, *Rosemary’s Baby* is his richest film, centring as it does on the Other in her most esoteric condition. His earlier and later films address aspects of her predicament – neurosis, vulnerability, strangeness – but Rosemary

SITTING INSIDE

Forget the devil, the real subject of Roman Polanski’s ‘Rosemary’s Baby’ is plain old pregnancy – something that makes women as uneasy as men.

By Jenny Diski

herself is ground zero: the reproducing woman. Pregnancy is the state in which women are most alien to men. This is not unreasonable: it’s also the state in which they may be most alien to themselves. Prior to pregnancy, and prior to the understanding of its linkage with reproduction, women’s ability to bleed and remain healthy has always been under interdiction; the rhetoric has claimed that they are unclean, but, more essentially, it is evidence – to men who bleed only when injured – that women are beyond the ordinary human condition. You don’t have to be a man to see that menstruation and pregnancy are likely to disturb those who do not experience them. You don’t have to be a man to feel that the internal incubation of a life is alien. Very likely we would all have got along a lot better if we’d evolved to reproduce by laying eggs. That way the male, like the Emperor Penguin, could sit with them on his feet and feel he was an active participant in the process. Women too could benefit from the same reassurance. In exploring Rosemary’s pregnancy, Polanski is not just looking at male resentment and envy at what is going on without their participation, he is also, and more interestingly, exploring the impotence of women themselves in the process of making life. Whether as a man he is fit to do so is per-



The morning after: Mia Farrow as Rosemary, pregnant and thus alien to men, and incubating Satan's child in 'Rosemary's Baby'

haps arguable, though not by me. (One of the great disservices of the teaching of English today – and by extension any creative activity – is that children are told they must write only out of their own experience, as if reaching out to what is not known had no part in creativity.) Personally, I'm happy for Polanski to do his best, or worst, or just middling, with a woman's experience of pregnancy, and content to assess the results.

Viewed from the perspective of all the *Exorcists* and *Omens* – parts one to infinity – *Rosemary's Baby*, released in 1968, looks like the mother of modern satanic movies. As such, it's a fairly ordinary popular film with a better than average sense of humour. The motivation is simple; emotionally remote, ambitious actor husband (John Cassavetes) succumbs to the temptations of good roles offered by a neighbouring coven in return for the use of his painfully naive and submissive wife's body (Mia Farrow at her most anorexic) to incubate the son of Satan. The fun is in the detail: Ruth Gordon's intrusive busybody as modern urban witch (all those interfering neighbours who can no longer be denounced and burned); Ralph Bellamy as a latterday witch-doctor (what male gynaecologist isn't?); Rosemary's proto-yuppie snobbery ("They only have three matching

plates") getting its come-uppance. But something else is going on which makes you suspect that the diabolical storyline is, after all, only a trope for something much more disturbing. The real subject of the film is child-bearing, not the devil's incarnation as Anti-Christ.

The all-pervasive use of the colour yellow (Rosemary's clothes, the flowered bedroom walls, the bed sheets, the nursery decor, the refrigerator; there's scarcely a frame without some tinge of yellow) whispers not of satanic hellfire but of Easter eggs, spring and birth. Red is saved for the outfit Rosemary wears on the night of impregnation, and if it carries overtones of the daddy incubus of them all, it also speaks of the menstrual cycle and the care with which Cassavetes, as husband Guy (good name), has ensured that the womb in question is nicely lined and receptive. It may not be the contaminated chocolate mousse that Ruth Gordon gives her to eat on baby-making night which renders Rosemary impotent in the matter of her own pregnancy, but Guy's assumption of control over the process at its earliest stages. Guy initiates the idea of making a baby and takes charge of the timing, appropriating Rosemary's menstrual cycle, marking the calendar on the kitchen wall, stabbing at it with his finger to point out to her the precise day of her peak fer-

tility. By the following month, he, not Rosemary, knows that she is exactly two days overdue. Guys like to keep tabs on what they fear they can't control. The stiff little pre-impregnation dinner à deux inaugurates not love-making but Rosemary's paralysis and rape by her husband and/or the Prince of Darkness. The apparently doctored mousse is a sufficient but not necessary condition for Rosemary's mental absence from the act of procreation; if we chose to set aside the satanic storyline, Guy's cold controlling formality would do just as well.

Rosemary dislikes the constant attention of her elderly neighbours, but the wilting of her already etiolated spirit seems to have more to do with Guy's neglect. For all I know, the symptoms she develops in early pregnancy may be classic signs of a woman bearing the son of Satan, but they must be just as common in women who through isolation feel that pregnancy is an illness. She loses weight (a horrible thing to see when the actress is Mia Farrow), she has pains "as if a wire was being tightened inside me", she is fearful of something she can't name. If we didn't know we were watching a satanic movie, we wouldn't hesitate to call her increasing conviction that there is a conspiracy between her husband and the neighbours paranoia. Certainly, the good gynaecologist she escapes her flat to go uptown to consult sees it that way, as she sits in his office and tells him what's been going on. Indeed, it takes an enormous effort of will to see it any other way, even within the conventions of the movie we think we're seeing, because Mia Farrow's performance in that scene is so classically psychotic. This is Polanski having it, uncomfortably for us, both ways. Read Rosemary's fears as the terror of pregnancy, and all the devil-bearing stuff falls into place as the world viewed from her disturbed mind. The neighbours are filmed less and less realistically, and in the final scene, where Rosemary breaks through into the next door flat to find the coven and the black-draped cradle, the view is so distorted that the far end of the room vanishes into near-infinite distance and the people in it are virtual statues.

From an objective point of view, a nine-month pregnancy is a mysterious and fearful thing. How do you know what is going on inside you? It's an astonishing feat of (I suppose) evolution that women mostly get through the long uncertainty believing that something perfectly ordinary is happening to them. Even so, there can be few who haven't wondered to themselves that something *live*, something *not them* is sitting inside them, taking nourishment and coming to term. Pregnancy and alien implantation are only a thin, rational line apart, and Polanski teeters along it as he tries to imagine what such an experience must be like. It's a classic case study of *pre-partum* psychosis, not such a rare thing, and certainly not an entirely unreasonable response to such an unreasonable situation. Guys like to be in control, after all, so what must it be like for the half of the race who for months at a time are not in control at all? Men may envy women's capacity to bear life, but they must also feel some relief that they are not obliged to do so. *Rosemary's Baby* is an expression of that ambiguity.



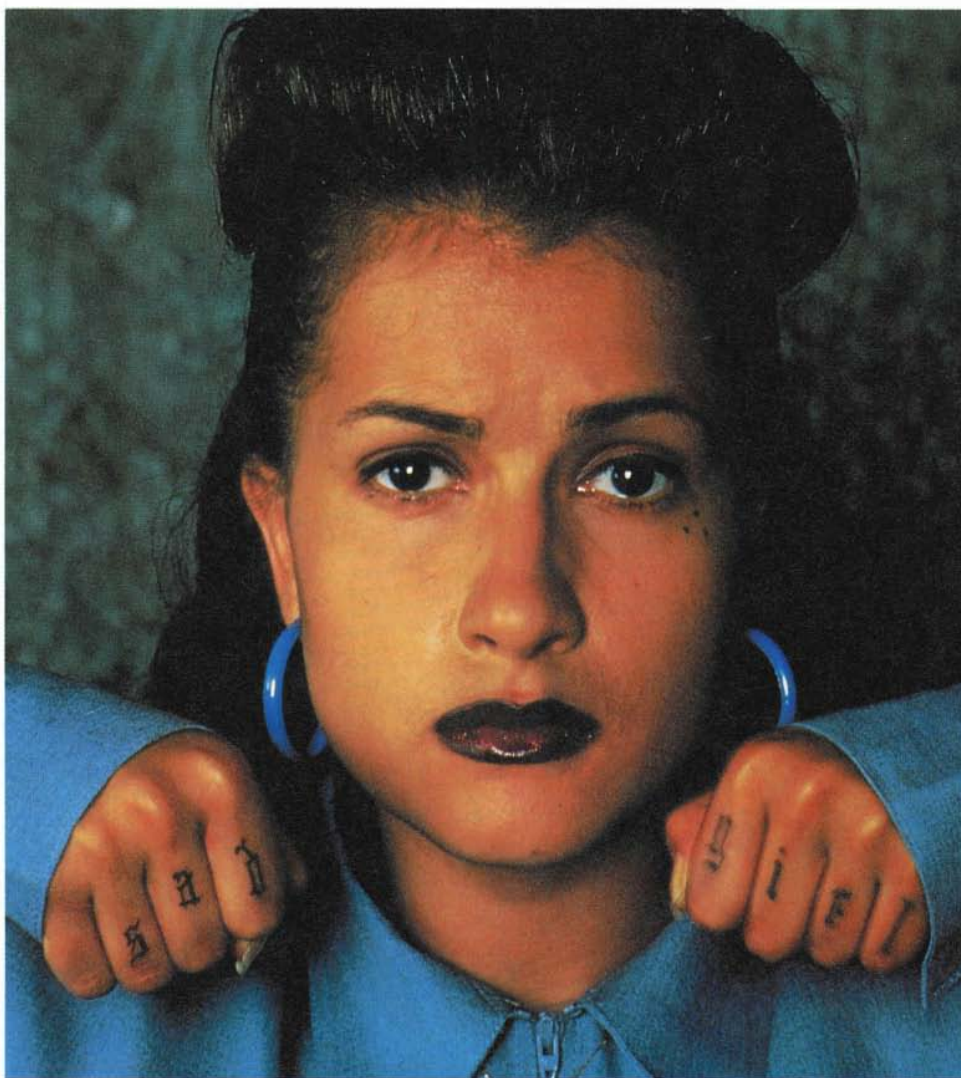
Infant sorrow: the disturbed mother takes in a bundle of joy in 'Rosemary's Baby'

SLUGGING IT OUT FOR SURVIVAL

Allison Anders' new film 'Mi Vida Loca' has three distinct plots, an idea she had before 'Pulp Fiction'; New York critics awarded her Best New Director for 'Gas Food Lodging'. B. Ruby Rich on a serious talent

Possession: Angel Aviles as Sad Girl, one of the five Chicana women whose stories make up Allison

Anders' 'Mi Vida Loca', top; the women all together, bottom left; Giggles and her man Sleepy, bottom right



● By now, the whole world may know the Allison Anders story. Of course, given the fleetingness of fame, it may already be forgotten. Wealth is all that's missing for hers to be a rags-to-riches legend, which as a result reads more like a white-trash-to-respected-artist saga. When she was discovered by the media after *Gas Food Lodging* in 1992, her profiles in the popular press developed a *pro forma* boilerplate that still follows her today. After all, it's her life.

She was born in Kentucky to a mother who was poor but loving, a survivor of numerous abusive relationships and a few good ones. Anders was gang-raped at 12 in Florida, had a gun pulled on her by a stepfather at 15 in Arizona, and Mom moved her daughters to California in 1969 to escape this especially bad choice of man. Anders was deemed crazy when she started hearing voices (in retrospect, not the worst trait for a future screenwriter/filmmaker). More precisely, though, she heard Paul McCartney's voice, along with a dozen others. Committed to a mental hospital, she became convinced that Paul was her boyfriend and, dead, was speaking to her from beyond the grave, this being the era of the "Paul is dead" rumour – a rumour, for those too young to remember, that materialised only when a particular record was played backwards. (Hold this idea: the Paul episode reappears.)

Anders eventually got out of the asylum. Then she dropped out of high school, met a Brit on a Greyhound bus and moved to England with him. Got pregnant, came back to the US. Got herself onto welfare and into Los Angeles Valley Junior College. Got pregnant again, had that baby, too. Welfare alternated with waitressing, while she tried to finish school. Two girls by now, Tiffany and Devon. And then, as fate would have it, she discovered film. Became obsessed, specifically, with the films of Wim Wenders. Wrote him hundreds of letters, dogged him as fiercely as the most obsessed groupie. He wrote back. She landed a job as a production assistant on *Paris, Texas*, running lines for Harry Dean Stanton. She made it into UCLA, shot her student film with financial help from Stanton and the *Paris, Texas* gang. She co-directed a feature film, *Border Radio*, which was then shown as a work-in-progress at the UCLA Film Archive. The rest, as they say, is history. "I still feel sort of marginal, but I guess I'm really not any more," say Anders. She only admits it tentatively, though.

Return, just in time

A welcome relief in the glum season of Gump, she returns to the UK with *Mi Vida Loca* (translation: *My Crazy Life*) only a few short years after being discovered – but not a moment too soon. With Newt Gingrich and punitive politics now in charge in the US, she is an unwanted conscience going about her business of redemption. *Mi Vida Loca* and *Gas Food Lodging* both showcase her ability to capture on camera the vernacular struggles of women who fight against the odds (meaning vanishing men) to bond with one other, all the while balancing material poverty with emotional richness. *Gas Food Lodging*, recall, was set in the milieu of a southwestern hardscrabble life, centring on a

waitress who wanted better for her daughters, only to see both veer away from her hopes. One was lost to dreaming, about (Anders-invented) Mexican movies and the boy who worked in the movie theatre; the other strayed into more predictable movie terrain of sexual desire and exploitation, and the allure of a noble drifter who nonetheless lets her down. The film refused hipness: Anders' palette was warm, her cinematographic choices smooth, her pace as subtle and deliberate as the decade could abide. As *Mi Vida Loca* confirms, she restores to view people who aren't meant to be seen, let alone heard, in the relentlessly upscale parlours of the neoconservative 90s.

At last year's Sundance film festival, Los Lobos flew in to play the party following *Mi Vida Loca*'s US premiere, setting off a riot for admittance – so that security guards ended up brutalising the guests. "Only the strong survive," quoth Anders. At the San Francisco International Film Festival screening, a genuine Oak-

"I just loved Wim Wenders' movies," insists Anders. "I was an obsessed fan. A lunatic, basically"

land girl gang shouted out from the balcony, the seeming challenge melting into a boast that, really, they were actors, and wanted to meet in the lobby. At her *Cine Café*, at the Philadelphia International Film Festival, a passionate discussion ensued concerning exactly why sex scenes in movies are always so bad. (Because male directors say things like "I hate directing sex scenes. I'd rather blow up a car," notes Anders – except Bertolucci, who's really good at it. "Everyone thinks it's about chemistry, but really it's choreography.")

She's an anomaly among today's independent US film-makers; a mature woman, not a twentysomething prodigy. In a time of aerobically bodies, she eats as she pleases. In the heyday of Armani chic, she dresses how she likes and happily shows off her tattoos and her children. She's a single mother in a Hollywood obsessed with photo-op matrimony. She's a feminist eternally on the look-out for a man, who complains she's not successful because she still can't get laid. No less an authority than Matt Dillon once told her that she was "kind of boy-crazy". In the heyday of victimhood, she believes in neither blame nor regret. She lives in Los Angeles not New York, but she behaves like an East Coaster. She writes her own scripts, and cultivates her own tastes.

'Mi Vida Loca' and its reception

Fans of *Gas Food Lodging* were surprised that *Mi Vida Loca* arrived with bad advance press from an early screening at Cannes. *Gas Food Lodging* had been a knockout: a trailer family of women coping with the presence and absence of men. It seemed effortlessly light-handed, the characters memorable, its tone of poignant hope and dis-

appointment starkly convincing. I was moved by it and intrigued by its success in fusing old-fashioned feelings with very up-to-date themes of sexual abuse, dead-end jobs, single motherhood. It's one of those rare films that reminds us that there should be whole genres of movies like this instead of a single stand-out specimen. I wasn't the only one who thought so. She was voted Best New Director by the New York Film Critics Circle and nominated for a slew of Independent Spirit awards, the prize of choice for alternative Hollywood. Yet rumour had it that Anders had been locked away in her editing room since Cannes, changing the structure of *Mi Vida Loca*. Not a good sign.

Nor an entirely accurate one. Anders' original script had called for three separate stories, but "everyone said" she should collapse them into one unified whole. So she did, and shot it that way and cut it that way. It didn't work. They had really been separate stories. "At first I thought, Is everyone just totally racist? These characters look totally different and they think they all look the same." But no: she decided it was the structure that needed changing, and though it was "painful", she put in time with a new editor, pulling apart the material and allowing the separate chapters to do their work once again. It was then that she realised she was making melodramas. Time out here for a riff on the greatness of John Stahl and Douglas Sirk. Her all-time favourite is *A Stolen Life*. She told her good pal Quentin Tarantino about her genre epiphany, but he matched it: "That's right, you make melodramas and I make comedies."

Actually, Anders thinks a lot of the bad word-of-mouth at Cannes came from the mis-positioning of the film as a gangbanger movie, some kind of Girlz N the Hood thing that then caused disappointment when the violence failed to materialise onscreen. Anders points out that her own approach to violence "is completely out of Perry Mason. It's basically bang, bang, drop. It's fake. I don't think that real violence has any place in melodrama."

So what's *Mi Vida Loca* about? Women's lives at the micro level: desire, affection, betrayal, loss, birth and death, guns and food, families real and invented. These are the fictional tales of young poor Chicana women in Echo Park, Los Angeles, homegirls who hang with the gangbangers and try to raise kids in the midst of it all. But it's a script based on real lives, on girls whom Anders or her daughters observed in the neighbourhood or whose stories she heard while writing the screenplay.

Anders tells her story through five homegirls: Sad Girl, Mousie, Whisper, Giggles and La Blue Eyes. Sad Girl and Mousie, best friends for life, fall out over their simultaneous love for Ernesto who fathers children with both – but really has a jones for his truck Suavecito, whose secret existence they only discover after his death. They bond, fight, then re-bond. The story of La Blue Eyes is different: an innocent college girl falls for El Duran, a jailhouse romeo who romances her in letters, then drops her cold; the homegirls plan a fanciful revenge that ends tragically. (Note here that the romeo's been widely reported to be John Taylor of Duran Duran, who once broke Anders' heart, and is ►

◀ appropriately repaid by character death: Taylor himself survived to do the soundtrack.) Then there's Giggles, the homegirl who comes out of the joint talking computers instead of guns. Her bedroom scene with a retired homeboy, Sleepy, is one of the most tender moments in the film. Whisper, the only major character played by a *loca* (a gang girl) instead of an actress, has street savvy and becomes an entrepreneurial drug-dealer; in real life, she got "jumped out" of the Echo Park gang after filming and now hangs with a different circle of *locas*.

The stories of the girls are separated by chapter headings, written in gang argot in typical *chola* writing styles. The chapters overlap and inflect one another even as the central focus shifts character and narrative position. Sound familiar to anyone? Yup, way ahead of *Pulp Fiction* (or *Before the Rain* or Kieślowski's *Blue/White/Red*), Anders was playing with the same kind of disarrangement of linear progression, a breaking up of the narrative motor that drives typical LA scriptwriting workshops, in order to open up a space for character and emotion. I hate to say this, but I can't help myself: when boys do it, it's genius; when girls do it, it's a problem.

Being a girl in Boys Town

Anders has begun to regret publicising her single-minded hounding of Wenders now that she's being subjected to the same treatment from a slew of wannabe boy directors. "I didn't do it because I thought Wim would help me make movies or make me famous or anything," she insists, arguing as much with herself as with any bystander. "I just loved his movies. I was an obsessed fan. A lunatic, basically. These kids seem to have an agenda in mind, to become famous or get their films produced, but I never did. I mean, I'll be striving all my life to make something as wonderful as *Alice in the Cities* or *Wings of Desire*. I loved his films. I guess I wasn't very ambitious."

Thinking about the greats, Anders remarks that many of them had been something else before becoming directors: Nicholas Ray was an architect, John Huston a newspaper man. "Film is not like rock'n'roll, that needs young people's insights. It's really a middle-aged medium. It's funny to me that now it's suddenly considered a young boy's medium." Anders has a deep sense of mentorship and of admiration: for instance, it's taken months to get used to the idea that Martin Scorsese will be executive producer on her project *Grace of My Heart*. "This is such a difficult medium. You really need mentors. But young male film-makers make the mistake of thinking they're supposed to drink beer and hang out with heroes like Sam Fuller or Arthur Penn. That's not it at all. Musicians understand this: they'll stand in awe of the greats, they'll humble themselves before a really seasoned musician."

In fact, Anders has managed to find some women mentors. They just haven't been directors (except for Lina Wertmüller, whom she reveres as a model). In her junior college years, Anders discovered a philosophy professor, Lep-ska Warren, who'd graduated from Bryn Mawr many years before and raised two children on her own at a time when such things weren't



Rock goddess: Allison Anders has filmed one of the rooms in the forthcoming 'Four Rooms'. Her room contains a coven of witches trying to resurrect a Betty Page-style entertainer who turned to stone 40 years before

done; plus she'd lived in Big Sur, knew all the Hollywood Ten. "She was an amazing and beautiful and enormously charismatic woman," Anders recalls. Then she found out that Warren had been married to Henry Miller for years and that he was in fact the father of her children. Anders asked her why she'd never mentioned this little detail. "Why should I talk about my life when I was young, stupid, and didn't know any better?" answered her mentor.

At UCLA, Anders was forced to take a film theory course with Janet Bergstrom, of *Camera Obscura* fame. The distaste was evidently mutual between Professor Bergstrom and the production students, who were made to endure one another for a required semester. Anders still remembers one moment in class when a particularly dense pupil asked what had happened to one character in a movie. "The colonel," sneered Bergstrom, "was taken care of by offscreen space." Anders used to go around making fun of this saying - until she made her own student film and realised that "my main character was totally taken care of by offscreen space, my whole first film at UCLA was offscreen space!" Eureka. "Goddamit, I learned all this stuff from this bitch. From then on, it was kind of sealed. I just fell in love with her, took a Renoir class and an experimental film class with her. She was the one who taught me how you create meaning with film." Anders now thinks it's crucial for film production students to study theory.

Women mentors are therefore crucial. Paula Weinstein (at Spring Creek), Amy Pascal and Stephanie Allain (at Columbia) are all doing things differently than the studio honchos before them, men or women ("I'm a Barbie doll but I'm a man," as Anders describes the first generation of femme execs). Weinstein just signed Anders to do an interracial love story. Ruth Charny (who produced *Grief*) is teaming up with Scorsese on *Grace of My Heart*. Kathryn Bigelow and Anders have both been active in the Independent Feature Project mentoring program, trying to encourage young women. But being a woman in Hollywood, being a woman director or actress anywhere, is still full of traps and ambushes. Anders worries.

For the new generation of actresses, she worries that "women are kidding themselves if they think they can go into *Vanity Fair* and take their clothes off and not be selling their souls when they do it. You can't do that in today's environment. You can take your clothes off in certain movies where you know you won't be exploited, but you can't go around saying you're a feminist and then show up in *Vanity Fair*." Why not? "Because *they're* going to have the control. And you're going to be presented and perceived in a certain way. And unfortunately women are gonna dig it, because the easiest thing for a woman is to fall for sexual attention."

The problems for a woman director are, naturally, very different. And so are her worries. In

1994, Anders was fretting about *The Piano* and *Orlando* as models. Not because she didn't like them – she did – but because the US marketplace seems to have room only for one model at a time, and this one raises a myriad of dangers. “I worry that the trap now will be that women directors have to be English or Australian to get financed here. Or that work from women directors will have to involve heavy costumes and period settings, that only ‘high art’ will be legitimate for women and something like melodrama will still be ‘low’ art. It’s also a class thing: women could be caught in a place where an accent is required for a Hollywood contract. Both Sally Potter and Jane Campion are wonderful directors, but I worry about their becoming the model for what women in the US are supposed to do.”

She cautiously delineates exactly what she means, painfully careful not to appear to make points at the expense of other women. “I mean, I’d worry just as much if *Sleepless in Seattle* or *The Beverly Hillbillies* became the only model for women directors, too. And I love Penelope Spheeris: her *Decline of Western Civilization* was a great inspiration for me. You know, I don’t think my films should be the model either. I just get scared. It’s so rare to see women’s experiences on screen, especially Latina or Black or Asian women. *The Joy Luck Club* (even though it was made by a man) and *Go Fish* were both such important films in that sense of representing experiences we hadn’t seen before on screen. It’s hopeful to find so many types of experiences out there, available as film material.”

Future plans

She is juggling so many projects at the moment that she doesn’t have time to grieve when one takes a fall. *Paul is Dead*, her autobiographical film based on her imaginary love affair with Paul McCartney, was deep-sixed by Hugh Grant. Anders had the script ready to go when the studmuffin of the moment bailed out, sinking her financing.

Oh well. Anders was pretty upset until she met Madonna at a party and bonded with the tarnished sex-goddess on Hugh-resentment (he’d dissed her in the tabloids).

As a result, Madonna is playing a lesbian witch in today’s hot project *Four Rooms*, with Alicia Witt (star of *Fun*) as her love-slave. With Anders on board, the token girl, alongside co-auteurs Quentin Tarantino, Robert Rodriguez, Alexandre Rockwell and wunderkind producer Lawrence Bender, *Four Rooms* is set in a sleazy LA hotel on New Year’s Eve, its conceit the journey of a bellboy (played by Tim Roth after Steve Buscemi turned it down) from room to room, each containing a different cast and situation. The four directors each wrote their own sections, then read one another’s scripts and made some changes, and shot and edited the result. Anders catalogues the rooms: Rodriguez has a family of little kids whose parents have gone off to a New Year’s Eve party, Rockwell has a married couple in which the older guy has tied up his wife, Tarantino has a *Twilight Zone* scenario of a guy betting his cigarette lighter can light 100 times. The Anders room is inhabited by a coven of witches, among them Madonna, Witt

and Lili Taylor, who have convened to summon the goddess (Amanda de Cadanet herself) to resurrect a Betty Page-style entertainer turned to stone in this very hotel 40 years before. Tim Roth evidently has the “life potion” they require for their ritual.

Four Rooms is quite a departure from the usual Anders film – it has more characters and less close-ups and way less “real life” than usual – but all her other prospective projects fit her melodrama trajectory. “I’ve gotten really serious about melodrama since *Mi Vida Loca*. Even though very melodramatic things happen in melodrama, like car crashes and pregnancies and amnesia, it’s what that does to the characters internally that motivates the action, not the other way around. It tells the story from the inside out.”

Closest to her heart, so to speak, is the Scorsese/Charny production *Grace of My Heart*, which starts shooting next month with backing from Gramercy. Ileana Douglas stars as a 50s-era

“The trap is that women directors will have to be English or Australian to be financed in Hollywood”

Philadelphia girl who dreams of becoming a singer but ends up a New York songwriter instead. Anders has been researching the girl groups of the period, which have long been her passion. “That was when women singers really sang for other women, not men. There was that whole tradition of ‘advice’ songs that they used to sing: girls, don’t go too far, or, he’s no good for you. That kind of thing.” One character is a Leslie Gore-style pop singer. Anders dreams of getting a lot of the old women songwriters from the 50s to write new songs for the film. She sings Scorsese’s praises as script doctor, waxing euphoric over how much she’s learned from him and how humble it’s made her.

(An aside: the Allison theory on the three stages of film-making. Anders believes that there are distinct personalities that oversee stages of film production and mark them with their particular warp. First, the stage of scriptwriting and casting and finance-seeking is ruled by control freaks, people who make sure everything is in place and pass judgement on whether a film will be allowed to come into being. Then comes the production phase, ruled by obsessive-compulsives, the domain of people who either drink too much or not at all, party too much or not at all, fuck too much or not at all: actors, grunts, techies, crew, and of course the director, adapting to the circumstances. With the film shot, all that changes: post-production is entirely in the hands of passive-aggressives, who edit the film or design the soundtrack or cut the negative, then modestly say they’re not going to take any credit for it, but they’re the ones who really saved the film. To me, she’s starting to sound like she’s describing a religious metaphor. “Yeah, Catholic dam-

age at the beginning, Jewish guilt at the end.” Anders rests, her case concluded.)

Two other projects wait in the wings. One is a television adaptation from Dorothy Allison’s extraordinary novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*, which Anders has been asked to direct; feeling too close to the material – sexual abuse in a white-trash environment – Anders had someone else write the script. Jennifer Jason Leigh is interested in playing the mom. Then there’s the documentary she sometimes fantasises about making, based on the case of a young woman in her Kentucky home town, a friend of her cousins, who was viciously murdered with her boyfriend while parked in a local lover’s lane. Though a local guy was convicted, nobody believed he did it – especially after the girl’s sinister father committed suicide.

Over the past year, I’ve tracked her from festival to festival, city to city. I caught the train with her when she left Philadelphia to meet Scorsese in New York. She was carrying the latest draft of her script to *Grace of My Heart*, which as executive producer he’s clearly supervising closely. I’ve witnessed countless examples of her distinctive wardrobe, all post-60s flower-child dresses, heavy on the rayon. We’ve shared meals in restaurants from tacky to sublime, talking our way non-stop through every course. I’ve even tracked her by phone as she shot and edited her section of *Four Rooms*. Anders seems to handle everything that comes her way with unfailing aplomb, humour and the magical phrase “Way cool.”

I’ve done all this for you, dear reader, so that you can rest assured: this chick is the real thing. Whatever Allison Anders shows on screen, she knows whereof she speaks. And believe it or not, her films come from someplace other than a film school script-writing class or a video-store catalogue. She’s an old-fashioned girl who lived her *vida loca* long before she ever wrote a screenplay or directed a scene. During the year of our acquaintance and my relentless note-taking, she’s released one movie, lost another, shot a third (well, one room’s worth), and written a fourth. She’s also turned 40 and adopted a son, Ruben, after he was orphaned by the death by overdose of his mother, a friend of some of the *Mi Vida Loca* gang girls.

By the time this article is published, Anders may have even more projects ready to go: her fame as a scriptwriter preceded her directorial debut and her interest in narrative seems insatiable. A true romantic, she is slugging it out for survival in a singularly anti-romantic era. She cares about people as well as characters and she’s studied the tradition she wants to claim. I love her movies because she’s able to balance the excess of emotion with the restraint of formal structure. For those of us who are no longer shocked by shock and not longer liberated by transgression, she blazes a trail to honest sentiment. She puts her heart on the line. The fact that 1995 is a time of real success for Anders is due cause for optimism, even for an old cynic like myself. Something must be right in the world if someone like her can prosper on the margins of the industry.

‘Mi Vida Loca’ opens on 24 March and is reviewed on page 48 of this issue

HERE AND

In Saigon, Tony Rayns talks with Tran Anh Hung, director of 'The Scent of Green Papaya', as he films his disturbing new movie 'Cyclo', set in present-day Vietnam

● The call is for 8am, and one of the first visitors to arrive on the rooftop location is Madame *La Censure*. The first thing you wonder is whether she dresses like this for the office. Her outfit is colourful and verging on the chic, topped off with a silk scarf and expensive shades. The flat roof of the apartment block on Lê Thánh Tôn in Saigon's District One is strewn with broken tiles and other debris and overgrown with reeds and mosses, and Madame *La Censure*'s shoes are not entirely sensible. As a communist cultural bureaucrat, though, she is used to coping with life's little insalubriousnesses, and she is soon squatting on a tiny plastic stool under a parasol, accepting plastic cups of mineral water from the boy who spends all

day serving snacks, coffees and Diet Cokes. It's rather noticeable that neither the Vietnamese nor the French on the film crew pay her any attention. The only one dancing attendance on her is the man from the Giai Phong Film Studio, the film's co-production company in Vietnam.

This is the 51st day of shooting on *Cyclo*, the new feature written and directed by Tran Anh Hung. (The project's English title is currently *Rickshaw Boy*, but since there are already Chinese and Japanese films with that title, that may well change.) It's the first day with journalists present – two French TV crews, people from various French magazines, me – which may explain why Madame *La Censure* has dressed up for the occasion. But it turns out that government cen-



Faces of morality in 'Cyclo': Tony Leung as The Poet a contradictory and taciturn figure, top right: The Poet with a nosebleed, looked after by Liên (Trần Nữ Yên Khê), middle right: Lê Văn Lộc as Kiên, bottom right: the woman who rents out cyclos (Nguyễn Nhu Quỳnh) tends her retarded son (Bùi Hoàng Huy), left

NOW

sors have been a permanent fixture throughout the production. A year or so ago, a Hong Kong movie crew shooting in Vietnam put one over on the authorities by filming and exporting unapproved material; no one will say what the offending images were, but they were “damaging to Vietnam”. Since then, the rule has been that someone from the Cultural Bureau must be present whenever foreign-owned film or videotape is rolling, and that all moving pictures must be viewed and approved before being exported. In the event, vetting both the *Cyclo* rushes and the TV documentary material turns out to be a mere formality, but one with its own sacrosanct bureaucratic rituals. Madame *La Censure* places each day's tapes in a

bag and seals it before taking it away. Does she watch the cassettes before returning them?

Tran Anh Hung and his French producer Christophe Rossignon have several official reasons why *The Scent of Green Papaya*, their first feature together, was shot in a studio outside Paris rather than in Vietnam: weather problems, scheduling problems, budget problems. All of which sounds like a diplomatic way of saying that they couldn't crack the Vietnamese government bureaucracy last time around. In *Cyclo*, they have a project much more difficult and censorable than *Green Papaya*: it shows a descent into crime, violence, weird sex and madness, and it's set in the here-and-now of Saigon in 1995, not safely in the colonial past. This film could only be shot on location, and so – fortified and financed by the international success of *Green Papaya* – they allowed an entire year for the negotiations with the Vietnamese authorities. As a result, Tran says, “there were no real problems. I told them very honestly what my intentions were. I explained that every character in the story is respected, that no one is insulted. Many times, apparently unsurmountable obstacles were overcome through sheer sincerity. If they trust you, they'll let you do what you need to do. If they don't like you, on the other hand, you might as well forget the idea of filming here.”

Back on the roof, the crew spend the entire morning laying a track through the rubble. Scene 77 shows a murder: the film's mysterious villain, a drug-soaked pimp known only as The Poet, kills the man who got carried away and deflowered The Poet's new girl. Both Tran and his cinematographer Benoît Delhomme have a penchant for sequence shots, and this scene is to be done in one extraordinary movement across the roof. The shot opens on the victim, whose throat has already been gashed, and follows him as he staggers away to collapse; The Poet follows and stabs him in the stomach when he begs for mercy; the man crawls to the edge of the roof, where The Poet delivers the *coup de grâce* while the camera looks down to the street below, where kids are letting off firecrackers.

The camera is mounted on an assembly manoeuvred by three grips, and its focus and angle of vision are radio-controlled. Not surprisingly, it takes several tries to get the shot right; Tran finally declares himself satisfied around 4pm. A stunt arranger from Hong Kong, macho in black lycra, supervises the action and the

blood effects, but producer Rossignon is worried about the safety aspects: are they going too close to the edge of the roof? Tran and the actors placate him by doing one obviously ‘safe’ take, and then go on to do it the way they wanted in the first place. Judging by the video playback, the ‘floating’ camera achieves a perfect balance between horror and imperturbability, between the shock of the moment and the sense that life goes on as normal.

‘Cyclo’ is the old French-colonial name for a pedicab (*cyclo-pousse*) and, by extension, its driver. Tran Anh Hung's protagonist is Kiên, a young man who lives with his grandfather and two sisters and supports the family by driving a rented cyclo. Kiên is the victim of a simple plot. One day his vehicle is stolen on the street, and he agrees to do other work for the woman who owns the cyclo fleet to recompense her for the loss. The woman (who dotes on her retarded son) actually arranged for the theft herself, as a means of forcing Kiên into crime. She turns the boy over to the care of The Poet, who hides him in a safe house and begins testing his moral scruples. His first criminal chores are relatively petty: vandalising a rice warehouse, an arson attack, delivering drugs. Meanwhile The Poet recruits Kiên's elder sister Liên as a prostitute, although, with Huysmans-esque perversity, he wants her to remain a virgin. The film reaches its moral climax when Kiên is ordered to execute a murder.

Tran Anh Hung was born in Vietnam (My Tho, 1962) but was educated in France, which means that he approaches Vietnam with both warmth and a certain detachment. That seeming contradiction was already evident in *The Scent of Green Papaya*, which was at once a magical attempt to reconstruct ‘missing’ images of Vietnam in the 1950s and a quasi-theoretical study of female servitude, and it looks as though it will inform *Cyclo* too. “I had the idea for this film,” he explains, “when I came back to Vietnam in 1991 to prepare *Green Papaya*. At that time I was expecting to shoot *Papaya* here, not in France. Coming back to Vietnam after many years away brought home to me how little I know about the country's history and culture, but I find that I don't want to know those things. What's important to me is to be touched by the place and the people; I want my eyes to be open to Vietnam's poetry. *Cyclo* is absolutely a film about Vietnam now, but I'm not interested in banal realism. It's also, in part, a film about father-son relationships, and I feel strongly ▶



◀ that it's necessary to go beyond realism to get to grips with them. I hope that the film has credible, realistic foundations, but what I'm after is a kind of baroque poetry."

Day 52 of the shoot is devoted to linking shots, showing Kiên and his sister on crowded streets, and so the French journalists and I take the chance to visit the film's most spectacular location as workmen begin to demolish it. The *Cyclo* script calls for The Poet to have a spacious apartment with balconies and a commanding view of the city streets below. In one scene it has to catch fire and burn. No existing building could be gutted, and so the film unit commandeered a small area of grass in the Cholon district, Saigon's Chinatown, and built one. It turns out to be not a jerry-built movie mock-up but a solid, three-storey house, in the middle of one of the city's busiest and most noisy roundabouts, surrounded by visual evidence of Saigon's frenetic economic development. When the top floor was set on fire, they say, there was no need to pay a crowd of extras to stand and watch.

The Poet is played by one of the film's two 'name' actors, the Hong Kong star Tony Leung. (That's Tony Leung Chiu-Wai, best known in Britain for Hou Xiaoxian's *A City of Sadness* and John Woo's *Hard-Boiled*, not Tony Leung Kar-Fai of *L'Amant*.) Tran says that he cast a Chinese

actor because he couldn't find any Vietnamese up to playing such a taciturn and contradictory character, capable of violence and extreme evil but generally preferring to stand back from life – a character who becomes a bad father to Kiên but clearly sees in the boy some echo of his own younger self. Tran in fact considered three Hong Kong actors for the role and chose Leung because he was so impressed by the interiority of his performance in *A City of Sadness*. The Poet's lines are all in Vietnamese or French, and so Leung had to take crash courses in both languages to play the part.

Leung was flattered to be asked, and accepted the role on the basis of meeting Tran, reading the script and looking at *Green Papaya*. ("I can't say I cared for *Green Papaya* all that much," he recalls, "but it was obviously made by a very talented director.") Undaunted by the character's sadism and moral nullity, he approached The Poet by asking Tran for details of the character's history: how did he meet the guys he hangs out with, and how long has he known them? "The script doesn't tell you much about his background, and he doesn't say much either. I needed to know where he was coming from so that I could give his lines the right inflection and get the body language right."

The 53rd day of filming takes us to the village of Song Be, an hour or so's drive from Saigon. (Nobody, incidentally, calls it "Ho Chi Minh City": even the baseball caps on sale in the street market read "Saigon, Vietnam".) The location is a magnificent country house called the Villa Ky Huong, and two sequences are to be shot here: a vignette in which The Poet washes Liên's hair in the backyard of the house, and a scene in the extensive, wooded garden in which

The Poet and two cronies send a young kid up a betel palm tree. The shoot is as fast and efficient as usual; the only thing that takes time is laying a track for a shot to move with The Poet and his entourage through the trees.

"What seduced me about Hung," Christophe Rossignon tells me, "was his absolute clarity and precision. I hadn't – and still haven't – met any other film-maker who could say exactly what he wants to do and why. He approached me a few years after he graduated from the Ecole Louis Lumière and I was so impressed by him that I agreed to produce his short *La Pierre d'attente*, which is about boat people but based on a Vietnamese legend. That led to *Green Papaya*, and now this film. Hung first told me his idea for *Cyclo* on the night we won the Caméra d'or in Cannes for *Papaya*, and I agreed to do it on the basis of a three-line synopsis. I

sent him off to Vietnam to research it and then joined him. My function in the collaboration, apart from producing, is to stand for the average non-Vietnamese viewer. I ask a lot of questions which stop Hung from doing things that westerners won't understand."

The Vietnamese authorities were delighted when *Green Papaya* was nominated for an Oscar, but it turns out that the film has had an odd career in Vietnam itself. "During the four months it took to cast *Cyclo*," Rossignon recalls, "we showed *Papaya* in cinemas all over the country, and it went down extremely well. Many people found it funny to be reminded of their childhood; I found myself seeing the film afresh through their eyes. I then gave the Vietnam rights to the Gai Phong Film Studio, our partners on *Cyclo*, as a goodwill gesture. They have two prints and a video master. But when *Papaya* was shown on TV here, the station in Hanoi used a pirated VHS copy that they bought on the street. 20 minutes were missing, and some reels had subtitles in some Scandinavian language..."

Vietnam's own film industry is in worse shape than China's. The economic reforms of the late 80s that withdrew subsidies from the state film studios also opened the country to the flood of pirated tapes that are on rental everywhere you look. (They are mostly Hong Kong and Hollywood movies, and the tapes seem to enter the country from China, along with all the pirated CDs and computer software.) When I visited Hanoi a few years ago, I met film industry bureaucrats who have since been fired in corruption scandals and directors baffled by the disappearance of their domestic audience and unsure what kinds of films they should be making. The films I saw then (melodramas, crime thrillers, turgid history lessons, timid attempts at sexploitation) suggested an urgent need for creative renewal in the industry. Since then, various French and Hong Kong Chinese movies shot on Vietnamese locations have brought in modern equipment and production methods, but the industry has not yet reinvented itself. The entrepreneurial flair evident on every city street hasn't yet reached the film-studio boardrooms; it has taken financial support from

Channel 4 to get Vietnam's best director, Dang Nhat Minh, back to work after a long absence.

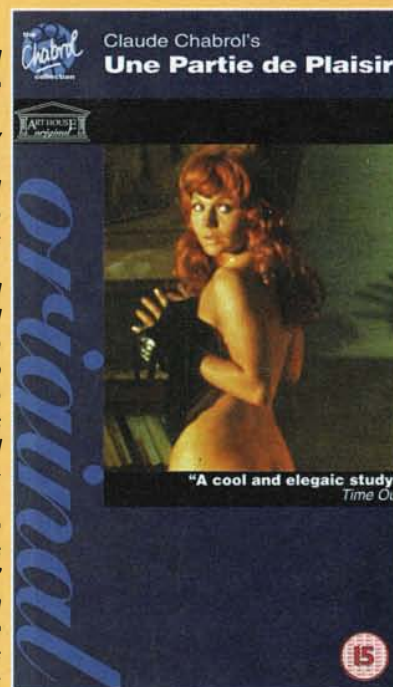
Will *Cyclo* help? The film (budgeted at US\$6 million – double the cost of *Green Papaya*) is obviously different from the likes of *Indochine* and Tsui Hark's *A Better Tomorrow III* in that it's rooted in a commitment to Vietnamese film culture and uses a 50% Vietnamese crew and a 99% Vietnamese cast. (The other 'name' on the cast list is Tran Nu Yên Khê, Tran Anh Hung's significant other, who plays the adult Mui in *Green Papaya* and the elder sister here.) It's curiously heartening to know that one of The Poet's henchmen is being played by a student from the acting class in Hanoi's film school. The longer I spend with the production, the clearer it becomes that Tran Anh Hung has done everything possible to create knock-on effects in the Vietnamese film industry.

My last day with the unit is spent on location in the city, at the intersection of two bustling backstreets. Scene nine shows the cyclo dropping off one client and trying to take another, only to be strong-armed by other cyclos, who tell him he's poaching on their turf. Delhomme is shooting the scene hand-held, which leaves Tran free to work with Lê Van Loc, the non-professional who plays Kiên, and the extras. Lê is actually a young truck driver who has spent most of his professional life to date trucking goods in and out of Laos; he was spotted on the streets of Da Nang by one of the assistant directors and auditioned for the role by Tran in March 1994. The director couldn't be happier with his actor: "I needed an adult with something of a child, someone muscled but also fragile. The audience has to believe that the character has a moral sense. Lê Van Loc looks exactly right, and he's very straightforward to work with. I like him a lot."

Local people, not used to being held up by the needs of a film production, shout abuse at the cops who are there to control the background traffic during takes. Not far from this intersection, though, there is already a bar named 'The Scent of Green Papaya' – not to mention bars named 'Planet Saigon' and 'Miss Saigon'. Short odds that there'll be one named 'Cyclo' before 1995 is out. Lê Van Loc is probably speaking for many Vietnamese when he tells me that he prefers renting videotapes to going to the cinema ("Videotapes are newer, and you can watch them without interruptions to sell ice cream"), but it's obvious that southern Vietnamese are latently movie-crazy. Maybe Tran's film will provide the impetus the local film industry needs to start recapturing the local film audience.

Postscript: The shoot of *Cyclo* finished on schedule in mid-February. Once the diplomatic and housekeeping chores are taken care of, Tran will return to Paris to begin editing. Christophe Rossignon aims to launch the film at the Venice Film Festival in August. As ever, Tran is clear about what he's been making and how it will play: "I hope and think *Cyclo* will be different from *Green Papaya*, but there will be a lot of cinematic continuities between the two films. I've set out to maintain the gentleness of style from *Papaya*. *Cyclo* is a film about masculine work and masculine violence, but made gently."

Nobody calls it "Ho Chi Minh City". Even the baseball caps on sale in the street markets read "Saigon, Vietnam"



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DREAMS OF CONQUEST

Why has the basketball documentary 'Hoop Dreams' had so much praise lavished on it. What does it say about America? By bell hooks

● Entering a movie theatre packed tight with the bodies of white folks waiting to see *Hoop Dreams*, the documentary about two African-American teenagers striving to become professional basketball players, I wanted to leave when it seemed that we (the two black folks I had come with – one of my five sisters and my ex-boyfriend) would not be able to sit together. Somehow I felt that I could not watch this film in a sea of whiteness without there being some body of blackness to anchor me, to see with me, to be a witness to the way black life was portrayed.

Now I have no problems with white filmmakers making films that focus on black life: the issue is only one of victim perspective. When you're living in white-supremacist culture the politics of location matters, no matter who is making a film about people of colour. In the United States, when white folks want to see and enjoy images of black folks on the screen, it is often in no way related to a desire to know real black people.

Sitting together in the packed crowd, every seat in the house taken, we joked about the atmosphere in the theatre. It was charged with a sense of excitement and tension, the anticipation normally present at sports events. The focus on basketball playing may have allowed the audience to loosen up some, but without knowing much about the content and direction of the film, and whether it was serious or not, folks were clearly there to have fun. As it began, a voyeuristic pleasure at being able to observe from a distance the lives of two black boys from working-class and poor inner-city backgrounds overcame the crowd. The lurid fascination involved in the "watching" of this documentary was itself profound documentation of the extent to which blackness has become commodified in this society – the degree to which black life, particularly the lives of poor and working-class black people, can become cheap entertainment even when the film-makers

don't intend anything like this. Film-makers Peter Gilbert, Fred Marx and Steve James make it clear in interviews that they want audiences to see the exploitative aspects of the sports systems in America even as they also wish to show the positives. Gilbert declares: "We would like to see these families going through some very rough times, overcoming a lot of obstacles, and rising above some of the typical media stereotypes that people have about inner-city families." Note the way in which Gilbert does not identify the race of these families. Yet it is precisely the fact of blackness that gives this documentary popular cultural appeal. The lure of *Hoop Dreams* is that it affirms that those on the bottom can ascend this society, even as it is critical of the manner in which they rise. This film tells the world how the American dream works. As the exploitative white coach at St Joseph's high school puts it while he verbally whips these black boys into shape: "This is America. You can make something of your life."

White standpoint

In the United States, reviewers, an overwhelming majority of whom are white, praised *Hoop Dreams*, making it the first documentary to be deemed worthy of an academy award for best picture, by critics and moviegoers alike. Contrary to the rave reviews it has received, though, there is nothing spectacular or technically outstanding about the film. It is not an inventive piece of work. Indeed, it must take its place within the continuum of traditional anthropological and/or ethnographic documentary works that show us the 'dark other' from the standpoint of whiteness. Inner-city, poor, black communities, seen as 'jungles' by many Americans, become in this film a zone white film-makers have crossed boundaries to enter, to document (over a period of five years) their subjects. To many progressive viewers, myself included, this film is moving because it acknowledges the positive aspects of black life

that make survival possible. Even as I encouraged everyone, including myself, to see the film, I also encouraged us to look at it critically.

Contextualising *Hoop Dreams* and evaluating it from a cinematic standpoint are crucial to any understanding of its phenomenal success. The fact is, though it's not a great documentary, it is a compelling and moving real-life drama. Indeed, its appeal is a testimony to this culture's obsession with real-life stories. In many ways the style of the film has much in common with the short documentary stories reported on the Five O'Clock News or in such sensationalist tabloid programmes as *Hard Copy*.

By comparison with many films examining the experience of black Americans which have overtly political content and speak directly about issues of racism (such as documentaries on Malcolm X, or the Civil Rights series *Eyes on the Prize*), the focus of this film was seen by reviewers as more welcoming. It highlights an issue Americans of all races, but particularly white Americans, can easily identify with: the longing of young black males to become great basketball players, and to play for the National Basketball Association. No doubt it is this standpoint that leads a review like David Denby's in *New York* magazine to proclaim it "an extraordinarily detailed and emotionally satisfying piece of work about American inner-city life, American hopes, American defeat." Such a comment seems highly ironic given the reality: that it is precisely the institutionalised racism and white-supremacist attitudes in everyday American life that actively prohibit black male participation in more diverse cultural arenas and spheres of employment, while presenting sports as the one location where recognition, success and material reward can be attained. The desperate feeling of not making it in American culture is what drives the two young black males, Arthur Agee and William Gates, to dream of making a career as professional ballplayers. They, their family and friends never imagine that they can be successful in any other way. Black and poor, they have no belief that they can attain wealth and power on any playing field other than sports. Yet this spirit of defeat and hopelessness, that informs their options in life and their choices, is not stressed. Their longing to succeed as ballplayers is presented as though it is no more than a positive American dream. The film suggests that it is only the possibility of being exploited by adults hoping to benefit from their success (coaches, parents, siblings, lovers) that makes their dream a potential nightmare.

The film's most powerful moments are those that subversively document the way in which these young, strong, black male bodies are callously objectified and dehumanised by the white-male dominated world of sports administration in America. *Hoop Dreams* shows audiences how coaches and scouts, searching to find the best ball players for their high-school and college teams, adopt an 'auction block' mentality that has to call to the mind of any aware viewer the history of slavery and the plantation economy, which was also built on the exploitation of young, strong, black male bodies. Just as the bodies of African-American slaves were

expendable, the bodies of black male ballplayers cease to matter if they cannot deliver the desired product. In the film, the film-makers expose the ruthless agendas of grown-ups, particularly those paternalistic, patriarchal white and black males, who are so over-invested, emotionally or otherwise, in the two teenagers.

While the trials and tribulations Agee and Gates encounter on the playing field give *Hoop Dreams* momentum, it is their engagement with family and friends, as well as their longing to be great ballplayers, that provide the emotional pathos. In particular, *Hoop Dreams* offers a different – in fact unique – portrayal of black mothers. Contrary to the popular myth of matriarchal ‘hard’ black women controlling their sons and emasculating them, the two mothers in this film offer their children all necessary support and care. Agee’s mother Sheila is clearly exemplary in her efforts to be a loving parent, providing vital discipline, encouragement and affection. Less charismatic (indeed she often appears to be trapped in a passive and depressive stoicism), Gates’ mother is kept in the background, the single mother raising her children. The film does not throw light on how she provides economically.

Both Sheila and Arthur, Agee’s father, are articulate, outspoken, intelligent black folks. While the representation of their intelligence counters some stereotypes, the fact that they are not able to work together to keep the family healthy and free of major dysfunction reinforces others. The portrait of Sheila is positive, but she is represented as always more concerned with keeping the family together than Arthur. This is a traditional and often stereotypical mass-media representation of black women which conveys the underlying assumption, both racist and sexist, that they are somehow ‘better’ than black men, more responsible, less lazy. Unfortunately, the news-story reportorial style of the film precludes any detailed investigation of Agee’s father’s drug addiction or the breakdown in their relationship. In keeping with stereotypical mass-media portraits of poor black families, *Hoop Dreams* merely shows the failure of black male parents to sustain meaningful ties with their children. It does not critically interrogate the complex circumstances and conditions of that failure.

Even though one of the saddest moments occurs as we witness Agee’s loss of faith in his father, and his mounting hostility and rage, he is never interrogated by the film-makers about the significance of this loss, as he is about his attitudes towards basketball, education and so on. And there is even less exploration of Gates’ problematic relationship to his son. Without any critical examination, these images of black father-and-son dynamics simply confirm negative stereotypes, then compound them by suggesting that even when black fathers are present in their children’s lives they are such losers that they have no positive impact. In this way, a cinematic portrait is created that in no way illuminates the emotional complexity of black male life. Indeed, via a process of oversimplification the film makes it appear that a longing to play ball is the all-consuming desire in the lives of these young black males. That other

longings they may have go unacknowledged and unfulfilled is not addressed. Hence the standpoint of the film-makers is no way to see how these states of deprivation and dissatisfaction might intensify the obsession with succeeding in sports. Audiences are surprised when we see Gates with a pregnant girlfriend, since until this scene the narrative has suggested basketball consumes all his energies.

Competition rules

This suggestion was obviously a strategic decision on the part of the film-makers. For much of the dramatic momentum of *Hoop Dreams* is rooted in its evocation of competition, through the documentary footage of basketball games where audiences are able to cheer on the stars of the film, empathically identifying with their success or failure, or via the rivalry the film constructs between Agee and Gates. Even though we see glimpses of camaraderie between the two black males, the film, constantly comparing and contrasting their fate, creates a symbolic competition.

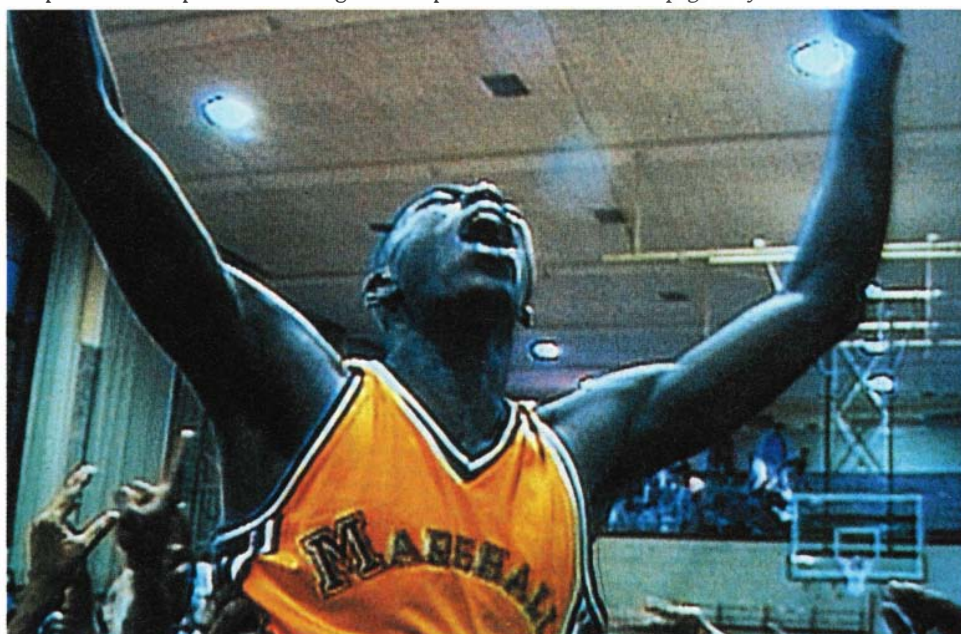
On one hand, there’s the logic of racial assimilation, which suggests that those black folks will be most successful who assume the values and attitudes of privileged whites; opposing this, there’s the logic of narrow nationalism, which suggests that staying within one’s own group is better because that is the only place where you can be safe, where you can survive. This latter vision, of narrow nationalism, is the one that ‘wins’ in the film. And it is perfectly in synch with the xenophobic nationalism that is gaining momentum among all groups in American culture.

Ultimately, *Hoop Dreams* offers a conservative vision of the conditions for ‘making it’ in the United States. It clearly argues that the context in which one ‘makes it’ is within a nuclear family that prays together, works hard and completely and uncritically believes in the American dream. An almost religious belief in the power of competition to bring success per-

meates American life. The ethic of competition is so passionately upheld and valued in Agee’s family that it intensifies the schism between him and his dad. William Gates learns to critique the ethic of competition that he has been socialised to accept passively within white-supremacist, capitalist patriarchy, but is portrayed as a victim. His longing to be a good parent, to not be obsessed with basketball, is not represented as a positive shift in his thinking. After his health deteriorates he is most often represented as hopeless and defeated. The triumphant individual in the film is (the young) Arthur Agee, who remains obsessed with the game. He continues to believe that he can win, that he can make it to the top.

In her book *Memoir of a Race Traitor* feminist writer Mab Segrest suggests that the ethic of competition undergirds the structure of racism and sexism in the United States, that to be ‘American’ is to be seduced by the lure of domination, by conquest, by winning: “As a child of Europeans, a woman whose families have spent many generations on these shores, some of them in relative material privilege, my culture raised me to compete for grades, for jobs, for money, for self-esteem. As my lungs breathed in competition, they breathed out the stale air of individualism, delivering the toxic message: You are on your own.” To be always in constant competition, hounded by the fear of failure, is the nature of the game in a culture of domination. A terrible loneliness shrouds Agee throughout *Hoop Dreams*. There is no escape. He has to keep playing the game. To escape is to fail. The subversive content in this film, its tragic messages, so akin to those conveyed in other hot movies on the American scene (*Interview with the Vampire*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Natural Born Killers*), are subsumed by the spectacle of playing the game – by the thrill of victory. Despite the costs, the American dream of conquest prevails and nothing changes.

‘Hoop Dreams’ is currently set to open on March 31, and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue



Playing the game: William Gates in the basketball documentary ‘Hoop Dreams’

HOMEOPATHIC

Georges Franju's nightmarish masterpiece 'Eyes without a Face' is about to be re-released. Below is the opening sequence. Overleaf the novelist Iain Sinclair on the cruel artifice of Franju's vision.



HORROR



Synopsis:

As the credits roll, a night-darkened landscape is seen from a moving car. A middle-aged woman drives, looking at someone – or something – in her rear-view mirror. At last she stops the car and drags out a body to dump it in the river.

Professor G nessier, a famous plastic surgeon, is delivering a paper on skin grafts. He is called away to identify the body as his daughter Christiane (Edith Scob), who was disfigured in a car accident for which he blames himself. But the corpse is really that of another girl, kidnapped by G nessier so her face could be sutured onto Christiane (who for the moment must wear a moulded mask to disguise her disfigurement). Louise, G nessier's devoted assistant (on whom he once performed a similar operation), cons a Swiss student named Edna into coming out to the mansion. Bringing her to their private laboratory, they remove Edna's face and transplant it on to Christiane's. Edna commits suicide, and they bury her body in 'Christiane's' tomb. The graft doesn't take, and Christiane's new face starts to deteriorate. A friend of Edna's reports her disappearance to the police. Christiane phones her boyfriend Jacques (a doctor who works with G nessier), speaks only G nessier's name and hangs up. Suspicious, Jacques goes to the police, and they set a trap with a decoy. G nessier is about to operate on the decoy when they call him away. Christiane, driven mad, frees the decoy, stabs Louise in the jugular and liberates the many dogs and birds her father has experimented on. The dogs kill G nessier, tearing his face to shreds. In the final image, Christiane walks into the woods, doves hovering about her.

Eyes without a Face didn't hold much appeal for the British critical establishment on its first appearance at the end of the 50s. Georges Franju, in Edinburgh for its launch, muttered darkly about hairy-kneed Scotsmen in skirts. The Scots could think themselves lucky. Franju had the reputation of being the Céline of conversationalists, a man of "torrential vehemence" spitting out excremental expletives like a tracer-stream of olive pits. Confronted with a distasteful fable about a crazed surgeon giving new meaning to the term "face lift", even *Sight and Sound* (according to Raymond Durnat) "bayed its utter scorn". So it's refreshing to report that, in the wake of the Cultural Studies boom that keeps so many semi-professional bullshitters afloat, fashion has shifted. "Genre" is now a respectable term and Franju's *ad hoc* liposuction behind the garage can be read as a precursor of *The Silence of the Lambs*. The real problem is that the film might not be quite bad enough to be worth patronising. Edith Scob doesn't have the self-consciousness to be voted the Madonna of the New Universities. There's nothing camp about Franju. He's far too earnest. He never gives the impression that he's slumming. He's not going to make it, with Roger Corman and Terence Fisher, into that particular pantheon.

The *Sight and Sound* of the 90s, with a much hipper agenda, was generous enough to lay on a screening to endorse the re-release of Franju's modest shocker. It was a rare privilege to test cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan's classically cold black and white images against my selective (and fading) memories of them. After a quarter of a century, the film in my head was a forensic collaboration: clusters of provocative stills, nightrides, the sound of a weir, Maurice Jarre's sinister soundtrack carousel. Narrative decays first, logic gives way to a poetic of the perverse. Accidentally captured weather is now unredeemable. We are free to co-author a dream version – like the cunningly butchered *Jungle Girl* epics the artist Joseph Cornell used to assemble for his chairbound brother. Worn-out cheapies rescued from junkshops, re-edited so that banal exchanges become, by repetition, magical. Cornell, an alchemist of trash, having no one to satisfy but himself, could afford to cut from one object of desire to the next; the temperature of excitement was the only continuity. Spontaneous composition: one image leading immediately and without censorship to the next.

But the two young women who were also at this BFI viewing were seeing the film for the first time. A period piece incapable of escaping its temporal limitations. They were not impressed. The surgical sequences were disgusting and the pacing funereal; all that plodding up endless staircases. Like Michael Winner having a pop at *Last Year in Marienbad*. But the cars and the clothes! They loved the shiny black Citroën DS. The fashions were unadulterated nostalgia. Their lives, they confessed, had been measured out in PVC flashbacks (available on prescription from Camden Lock market). On the retro level, Franju can still hack it. A film is certainly worth resurrecting when it is replete with styles that can be so effortlessly plagiarised.

To see the branches of these trees from the point of view of the camera, you'd have to be inside an open coffin.

Franju speaks of film as being a perpetual present tense, but the effect of viewing *Eyes without a Face*, even when it was a novelty, was of encountering a future memory, an auditioning nightmare. There was a somatic inevitability about the experience: a chill of recognition, familiar events that had not yet happened. An anaesthetic shock that floats between terror and boredom. The opening sequence, the night drive, is as haunting as the first dream of a dead man. The film's on a loop. It's happening backwards. The drift of light down the tree-lined road, the spasms of music, the headlights flaring in pursuit, they're tautologous. They are a staple of *film noir*. You'll catch them soon in *Psycho*. But that woman was running away. And she was alone. The way to 'justify' this loaded riff is to think of it as being seamlessly connected to the film's end, to Edith Scob wandering, like a blind woman, into the woods with her nimbus of doves. The kitsch poetry and obvious symbolism of the conclusion is underwritten by the ferocity of the start: Cocteau's decorative similes stomped by Mickey Spillane. To see the bare branches of these trees from the point of view of the travelling camera, you'd have to be inside an open coffin. The trees are their own negatives. They are watched through closed eyelids. The film feels as if it's been shot from the rear of a speeding car and then reversed. Sound is strangely amplified. The river is an overwhelming presence. The butch chauffeur's glossy black coat looks as if it's been tailored out of film stock. The dead passenger, nodding as if drunk, has been strapped, childlike, into the rear seat. We gaze at the world with her slightly puzzled sense of wonder, when every posthumous detail is fresh and miraculous.

Arriving at the riverbank, we are made aware, by both the cutting and the performances, that these characters are controlled. They move like zombies. They sleepwalk. Alida Valli drags the girl's corpse to the water's edge as if she herself were being propelled, part of a human wheelbarrow. The concentration demanded is obsessive, fetishistic. Nothing in the narrative quite accounts for the significance of this costumed ceremony, the nude victim draped in a man's raincoat. (Why? Who does this garment belong to?) Tension is provoked by the accidental poetry that is aroused when the aesthetic of special-interest pornography is vitalised by a rush of pulp fiction: the ravaged disbelief found in Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly*, another night drive, another naked woman in a trenchcoat stepping into the headlights. These spectral (and disposable) hitch-hikers, incidental to the plot, achieve their importance as mannequins of the irrational.

Christopher Petit has described *Eyes without a Face* as "Hammer Films meets Georges Bataille". And there is something in this. (Something also of Angela Carter collaborating with Simenon: the grown-up fairy story told as a police procedural, imprisoned daughters and detectives with bad tobacco habits.) Bataille's great moment in cinema came with Buñuel's razor across the eyeball in *Un Chien Andalou*. But he had that sense of cruel artifice necessary to penetrate the layers of Franju's film. "It is clear," he wrote in *The Solar Anus*, "that the world is purely parodic, in other words, that each thing seen is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form." *Eyes without a Face* breaks down into self-contained

stanzas that operate through repetition, as in a verse drama, the juxtaposition of visionary seizures with slower passages of exposition. But the process can easily be reversed: narrative explosions, plotting dispensed with, to make time for the predatory drives, the sepulchre at night when the plane passes slowly overhead, those vertiginous ascents chasing shadows up endless staircases. Society, when it is encountered, is satirised: insect women attending Dr Génessier's lecture with their "walkers". Retread faces, stitches covered with make-up, listening to a talk on skin grafts. ("As to the future, Madame, we cannot wait that long.") Priests and Proustian vampires like the trapped guests of *The Exterminating Angel*. Even the crowd queuing for the Lonesco play look as if they've been dug up for the occasion, absurdist stiff in cenotaph hats.

The setting, in keeping with the Hammer tradition, is somewhere just beyond the metropolis: a hospital, madhouse, private surgery. Franju's bleak poetic is documentary in impulse. The secret horrors take place in a real city: river, railways, bookshops, cafés, the Eiffel Tower. As they might be seen by Brassai or Robert Doisneau. Student life, casually exploited by the *Nouvelle Vague* directors, is seen here as a meat-market to be trawled for involuntary face-donors by Valli, the Sapphic succubus in her 2CV. (Juliette Mayniel, the provincial pick-up, will reappear in Chabrol's *Les Cousins*.) The distance between the city and Dr Génessier's house of horror is the distance between London and the film studios at Bray. Franju is scrupulous in his delineation of that journey: one epiphany is a track-in on the level-crossing gates when Mayniel's fatal ride is interrupted by a passing express. Smoke hesitates over the damp ground. The camera holds fast on the 'safe' side of the barrier, letting the two women drive on into the land of the dead.

Inside Génessier's overblown mansion, with its Second Empire furniture and cellars of howling dogs, we shift from the detached documentation of the city to the Sadeian privacy of a closed set, where the director (medical or cinematic) can administer "horror in homeopathic doses". Suddenly, the fabulous has been domesticated. Beauty, in her chintzy, dove-filled boudoir, is also the Beast. The ingredients of the classic fairy story are present – the castle in the woods, the remote father, the 'wicked' stepmother – but they have been subverted. Actors carry with them not only the overspill of their public/private lives (Ingrid Bergman in Rossellini's *Stromboli* and *Voyage to Italy*) but also their previous movie biographies. Valli, the 'foreigner' of *Eyes without a Face*, has to live up to the melancholy accretions of *The Third Man* and Antonioni's *Il grido*. A double past: the romantic exploitation of Génessier's house has to respect all that history.

Edith Scob, more than any other element, brings Franju's conceit to life. The name alone is enough, like the anagram of a wound. It carries more of a charge than the fictive "Christiane" and its wimpish *Pilgrim's Progress* piety. Scob is a mesmerising presence, an arsenic-powdered kabuki doll, with a tensile, steel-skin fragility. A porcelain mask clipped over a carcinomic mess of flesh. Scob doesn't walk, she swims upright – arms at her side, stiff as twigs. She's covered, head to toe, in a stiff, airfixed gown: the mino-

**A porcelain mask
clipped over a
carcinomic mess of
flesh. Scob doesn't
walk, she swims
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side, stiff as twigs.**

taur's bride. Her thin neck stretches like a stem out of the upturned collar. The convulsive gesture, lifting her hands to her throat, is echoed by Mayniel on her arrival at the house, as if it was a symbol of initiation into a sorority of masochists. Bandaged like a futurist chrysalis, Scob whispers her lover's name into the telephone – a tender communication from beyond the grave.

As in the opera, the women's clothes are unwearable signifiers of character. Valli's at-home dress is as thick as a carpet, tricked out with flaps and epaulettes like a military greatcoat. The claustrophobic cosiness of Christiane's bedroom, with its coal fire and fussy ornaments, is contradicted by the functionally spare basement in which the surgery takes place.

The climax of the whole performance, the operation itself, is taken head-on, with no tactful cutaways. The spare-parts virtuoso sweats and does the business – like Picasso in the Clouzot film, drawing directly onto glass. Génessier sketches with a pencil and blood oozes from his line. Franju is taking his inspiration from his recollections of Dr Thierry de Martel's *Trépanation pour crise d'épilepsie Bravais-Jacksonienne*: a surgical documentary from which 20 people had to be carried out. "An atrocious film, but a beautiful and poetic one, because it was so realistic."

The face, which should be the essence of the actor, is disallowed, replaced by a mask. Or the illusion of a mask – which only heightens our expectations for the dinner-table scene where Christiane's new face is revealed. Hidden, she had been free to wander among the cages of dogs, spontaneous in her gestures, knowing she was unobserved. In her hallucinatory progress she spurned the kitsch of her mother's portrait, one of those expensive vanity numbers painted from a Polaroid, only for it to become the image at the end of the film, the walk into the woods. The very clip that the audience will carry away.

Much of the film's atmosphere is achieved by a carefully layered soundtrack: amplified rooks, doves, dogs, tyres on gravel, interspersed with Maurice Jarre's troubling music-box interludes, nails inside a tin drum, reducing the doctor's mansion to the dimensions of a doll's house. Sound is another present tense, a violation of immediacy that frets against the dreamtime of visuals so seductive that we want to retain them beyond their allotted span. Church bells intrude on Valli's reverie as she waits for Génessier to dispose of a body in the family vault (just as the striking of clock counterpoints the strokes of the butcher in *Le Sang des bêtes*). All the constituent parts combine to create a poetry of the paranoid, the bureaucratic – attic offices with thrift-store furniture, hospital corridors, mortuary hotels perched where the Métro runs out. Franju fetishises objects, arranges surreal collisions, insinuates his subversive strategies into a world of bland conformity, handshakes and stiff bows. With those qualities, it's quite possible that his time has come round again.

Tapping out this report on an unfamiliar machine, a word processor, I'm still timid about closing the thing down. A reassuring but peculiarly apposite message appears on the screen: "It is now safe to switch off your Macintosh."

'Eyes without a Face' is rereleased on 27 April to run at the ICA cinema and subsequently on a national tour

When producers Denise DiNovi and Amy Pascal were casting around for directors to work for Columbia studios on a third version of Louisa May Alcott's semi-autobiographical *Little Women*, Gillian Armstrong must have seemed an obvious choice, perhaps even a little too obvious. Her debut feature *My Brilliant Career* (1979) was also adapted from an autobiographical novel: Miles Franklin's, who at the age of 16 was writing about her life with a wonderfully audacious spirit. Alcott's March sisters, particularly the intrepid, literary-minded Jo, were nineteenth-century girls of slender means pulling together while their father is away during the Civil War. An updating of their adventures surely needed some of the mettle that Armstrong had injected into *My Brilliant Career*, with its boisterous heroine Sybylla Melvyn. Alcott, too, had had a rather unusual life: her family were transcendentalists who at one point lived in a commune, while she grew up to champion social reform and was the first woman to register to vote in her home town of Concord. Asked to come up with a "girl's story" by her publisher in 1869, she chose to intimate the brave new world for young women in those times through the character of Jo in *Little Women* (and to some extent though the wilful youngest sister Amy, who becomes a painter). But there is also a sense of restraint in the novel, as though Alcott could not let her own experience quite bubble through. In the film, however, Armstrong and screenwriter Robin Swicord gently loosen the stays, alluding to concerns Alcott could not quite spell out. In the novel, for instance, the March mother, known as Marmee, exhorts the virtues of modesty in a young girl: in the film this speech becomes an ironic comment about a society which disenfranchises women. "Ladies guard their modesty for one practical reason: we are not as highly valued as men. We are forbidden to govern, or vote or inherit land."

As played by Judy Davis, *My Brilliant Career*'s Sybylla would have recognised this plight. "This story is going to be all about me..." announces Davis with a fiery glint, as she trudges round the dusty outback farm in her layers of calico petticoats, pen and paper in hand. Set in 1901, the film seemed to bequeath the coming century to young female audiences. Here is a bush-girl heroine, who starts out gorse-haired and slightly gap-toothed, dreaming of being a writer, battling with all, not least herself, to achieve it. *My Brilliant Career* was about optimism and opportunity, and for the late 70s this was something of a revelation. In its final image, Sybylla is looking ahead, smiling as her head tilted towards a future that is uncertain but also promises to be eventful. With Davis' exuberant, peppery performance and Armstrong's painterly eye, the film stamped itself on many an imagination and no doubt prompted some to speculate where their own careers might venture.

A Virago classic for the film world, Armstrong's treatment of *My Brilliant Career* brought Sybylla and Miles Franklin to wider mainstream audiences at a key moment in feminism's reappraisal of women's contributions to history and literature. Armstrong was the first woman to direct in Australia since Paulette McDonagh of

WHAT ARE YOU GIRLS GOING TO DO?

How do Gillian Armstrong's edgy contemporary films sit alongside her costume dramas? On the release of 'Little Women', she talks with Lizzie Francke



the trailblazing McDonagh sisters (Paulette, Phyllis and Isobel, respectively director, writer/producer and actress during the late 20s and early 30s). With her producer Margaret Fink and her screenwriter Eleanor Witcombe, Armstrong ensured that women had a high profile in the new wave of Australian film-makers that emerged in the late 70s, a group which included Peter Weir and Bruce Beresford. (Indeed it is interesting with hindsight to note that the two major successes of Australian cinema in 1979 were, somewhat incongruously, *My Brilliant Career* and George Miller's *Mad Max*). In this respect Armstrong and *My Brilliant Career* indicated a whole array of possibilities, something surely not lost on those Australasian women film-makers who have since made their

mark: Jane Campion, Alison Maclean, Ann Turner, Tracey Moffatt and Jocelyn Moorhouse.

As Armstrong reflects on her own early career, the value of having precedents becomes clear. "When I went to film school it had only been going for five years. I didn't go to film school to be a director. I didn't think about it because there were no women directors. I studied theatre design first at Swinbourne technical college: it was really only by going there that I learnt about film from the practical side. I was lucky - because it was an art school, it was much more liberated than other types of education. But when we started talking about what we were going to do when we left, the lecturers viewed us with some puzzlement - as if to say 'What are you girls going to do?' Certainly I had no idea of how I was going to make a living. My only aim at the time was to be a script supervisor in drama at the ABC TV station. That was my ultimate ambition. It was just lucky that my final year coincided with the time that the Australian government had just started to invest in the idea of a film industry as a result of various film-makers lobbying. Fred Schepisi had just got some money to make a short film and asked some of the students to work on it for experience. He was very positive and took time to look at our final year films."

With Schepisi's encouragement, Armstrong decided to pursue a career in film. "But it was interesting: when I first tried to get a job, all anybody could suggest was continuity, either that or neg matching." It was only after meeting a woman editor at one production house that Armstrong was persuaded that she had more than a modicum of creative talent. "She was quite firm about me not going into continuity, and persuaded me into editing. It is perhaps indicative that at the time even women editors were rare. But there were various changes occurring in the early 70s: the rebirth of the industry also coincided with the arrival of the feminist movement, which was particularly strong in Sydney." Armstrong cites in particular the Sydney Women's Film Group, formed in 1971, who encouraged the then-nascent national film and television school to be conscious about ensuring an equal female intake, whilst also putting pressure on the government to set up a separate women's film fund. Armstrong herself sat on selection panels for the fund and also had her films screened at the numerous festivals that the SWFG organised. At the same time, however, she sat apart from the group. "They were a political movement who were more interested in the content of the films, in that it had to be about women's issues. I was interested in the content and how it was applied and for that I was sometimes criticised. But if they were narrow, it was also their strength. The SWFG had a powerful effect which really did pay off."

While feminism helped Armstrong redefine what professions women could do, she was very clear in interviews after *My Brilliant Career* about not being defined as a 'woman's director', seeming a reaction specifically to the typecasting she was experiencing at the time, which she claims sent her "in the opposite way looking for completely different material. I was offered every

single story that was about a young woman achieving – the first woman to climb a mountain, the first woman to fly a plane. Everyone thought Sybylla was me – that I had had a terrible struggle as a young woman, but really I had a very easy pathway.” But though she claims that she “hasn’t gone out and planned it”, in retrospect her career has indeed been devoted to stories about women.

There also seems to be a consistent dedication in the fact that, interlaced with her feature film career, are a series of three documentaries, all with state backing: *Smokes and Lollies* (1977), *14’s Good, 18’s Better* (1981) and *Bingo, Bridesmaids and Braces* (1988), chronicling the lives as they grow up of Josie, Kerry and Diana, three working class girls from Adelaide. Superficially similar to Michael Apted’s *Seven Up* and its follow-ups, Armstrong’s series has a far more considered view of class and gender, and the Australian film critic Philippa Hawker, making the comparison, has commented, “[Apted] also tracks the lives of a group of three girlfriends, but fails to get very far with them. Of all his subjects, they are the most distant, the most resistant to self-analysis; partly one suspects, because Apted himself does not find the minutiae of their lives interesting and does not succeed in seeing them as individuals.” Meanwhile Josie, Kerry and Diana are given the space to chronicle their lives with great precision, part of the documentary process rather than mere objects of its scrutiny. In *14’s Good, 18’s Better*, for instance, there is a fierce sense of self-awareness as Josie wryly recounts how she sent an elaborate bouquet to herself after giving birth to her first child, since there was nobody else to do it. This sense of the value of such telling details is exactly what Armstrong brings to her fiction.

Her debut aside, Armstrong’s features seem to come in two forms, in terms of their approach to female experience. There are the period films for Hollywood: *Mrs. Soffel* (1984), based on a true story about a jail warder’s wife who escapes from her own dour, prison-like marriage to run away with a lusty young convict, a suitably melancholic and atmosphere-based tale which one suspects should have been a little starker still; and now *Little Women*. Then there are the edgy, contemporary films made on low budgets in Australia: *Starstruck* (1982), *High Tide* (1987, scripted by Laura Jones who also adapted *An Angel at My Table*) and *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (1992, scripted by novelist Helen Garner), the first was a kitsch post-punk musical about a wannabe Debbie Harry, the latter two finely nuanced, sharply observed and visually alluring studies of dysfunctional family relationships (at the point where the documentarist and the woman who once aspired to be a theatre designer meet): Judy Davis’ second-rate singer Lilli in *High Tide*, winds up at a washed-out seaside trailer park and finds herself caught up with the daughter she abandoned years before; Kerry Fox’s impetuous and greedy Vicki in *The Last Days of Chez Nous* seems intent on smashing up her elder sister Beth’s already cracked family life.

It isn’t that opportunities for directing contemporary stories in Hollywood haven’t come her way: tellingly, she turned down both *Ghost*



All-female family: the women members of the March household, Susan Sarandon as the mother, the father gone to war. left: Kirsten Dunst as the younger Amy March, top: Winona Ryder as the literary-minded and serious Jo March, above: Trini Alvarado as Meg March, above

and *Working Girl*. She also worked on *Fires Within* (1991), which focused on the re-establishment of a relationship between a Cuban political prisoner and his family after his release (a story not dissimilar to that of Mira Nair’s forthcoming *The Perez Family*, also scripted by Swicord). But *Fires Within* proved to be an intolerable experience, and after much re-editing, which resulted in a refocusing of the film around the sex scenes between the leads Jimmy Smits and Greta Scacchi, Armstrong took her name off it.

Certainly Armstrong is very circumspect about Hollywood. Though she describes *Mrs. Soffel* and *Little Women* as positive experiences, she puts this down to working with producers who share her sensibility and who are willing to fight through the studio bureaucracy to

keep a film’s integrity intact. It is also important that she is able to work closely with the screenwriter. “The script is everything. But I am finding that at the moment that American scripts, of which I am reading dozens at the moment, tend to be mostly formula. Time and time again when I read something that has an extra edge to it, in which the characters have more depth, it has been adapted from a book.”

Meanwhile she puts Hollywood’s renewed interest in the literary adaptation/costume drama down to the success of Merchant Ivory, particularly *Howards End*. The 1910 novel toyed with questions of female emancipation, which James Ivory and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala then brought to the fore. One cannot but think of how E. M. Forster’s Schlegel sisters fit in with the March siblings and Sybylla: there is a return engagement, an overstretching-in-time in which women, bustling around in their layers of skirts, are perpetually poised on the brink of something else.

Fifteen years on from *My Brilliant Career*, Armstrong considers: “I actually had a lot of doubts about doing *Little Women* when it was originally offered me because I felt that it touched on many of the concerns of *My Brilliant Career*. Basically the arguments that were put to me were that *My Brilliant Career* was done so many years ago, enough time for a whole generation of young women and girls to be out there who had never seen it.”

It is revealing then that Armstrong is happy rather than offended when told that the film of *Little Women* reminds at least one viewer of why she liked the book when she was eight – or was it the 1933 George Cukor film version with Katharine Hepburn as Jo, or the 1948, by Mervyn LeRoy, or even the 1970 BBC series? Indeed *Little Women* is enough part of popular culture for people to know about the death of Beth without having read or seen it. With Swicord’s script, the film – along with this 32-year-old’s memory – provides a selective reading as it filters out the more sanctimonious preachings of Marmee, and enhances the more obviously progressive implications on the subject of the education of women and of Jo and May fulfilling their artistic aspirations. In this respect it is a handsomely decorated ‘feminism for beginners’ primer that also deftly allows for all the anticipated emotional release.

Little Women has rightfully re-instated Armstrong’s reputation to a wider audience. But one hopes that she can carry the March sisters beyond the ‘coming of age’ through to the more complicated entanglements characterised by her Australian films. *High Tide* and *The Last Days of Chez Nous* both centred on the shifting and perplexing nexus of female relationships in fragmented families – families only the potentially feckless Amy March could ever have imagined. These are films about the hollowing out of aspirations, the cutting down of dreams into pragmatic reality. And both end speculatively, pointing a way forward but without making promises for the true great-grand-daughters of Sybylla and Jo.

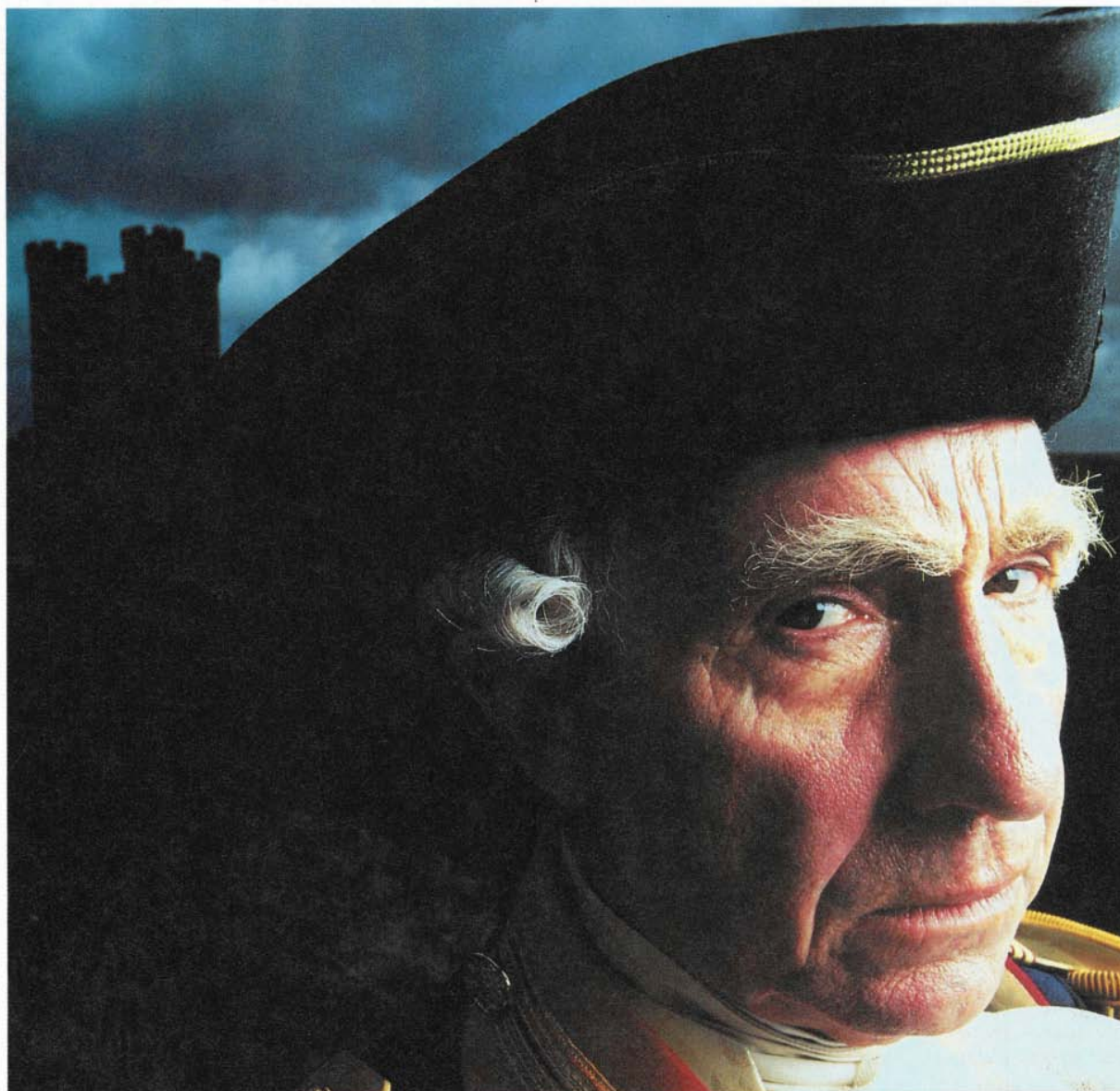
‘Little Women’ opened on 17 March. ‘The Last Days of Chez Nous’ is available on Tartan video: ‘High Tide’ is available on Connoisseur video

POWER MAD

Hollywood often exploits the power of lunacy. So did Jonathan Swift. How does 'The Madness of King George' measure up?
By Jonathan Coe

● "Transcendent" was the word used to describe Nigel Hawthorne's performance in the National Theatre production of Alan Bennett's *The Madness of George III*, not by some hyperventilating reviewer but by Bennett himself. It was Hawthorne alone, according to the playwright, who turned the mad King from "a gabbling bore" into "a human and sympathetic figure". Now the play has been filmed and retitled: *The Madness of King George*. And since we know that Hollywood is big on humanity and sympathy, Hawthorne's star performance must account for much of its transatlantic success. For a film which has the temerity even to flirt with the idea that "the state of monarchy and the state of lunacy share a frontier," it has enjoyed a remarkably warm welcome.

Until now, Hawthorne's only major American role has been in Marco Brambilla's dystopian satire *Demolition Man*, where he played another lunatic, of sorts – an evil scientific mastermind called Dr Cocteau, who is responsible for the brainwashing of Los Angeles. By the year 2032, he has turned it into a community of clean-living, clean-talking, vegetarian, non-violent zombies. Justifying his actions to a sceptical Sylvester Stallone, and looking back to the brutal urban wars of the



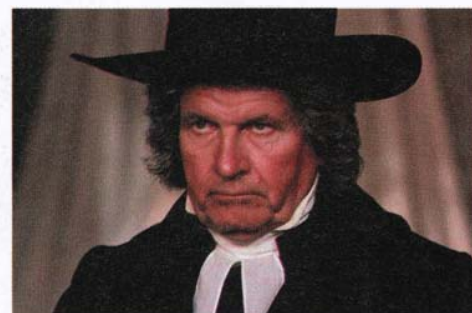
Before the cure:
Nigel Hawthorne, a fool among knaves, as George in the Alan Bennett-scripted film 'The Madness of King George', directed by Nicholas Hytner

late twentieth century, he explains that "People wanted the madness to be over." But the rhetoric of the film makes it clear that Cocteau himself is the real madman: his unforgivable crime, in the words of Wesley Snipes, is that he has taken away "people's right to be assholes."

Cocteau, whose sanity is also repeatedly called into question by Stallone's character, can be viewed as yet another in the long line of mad genius figures so beloved of Hollywood and so frequently played by British actors: madness, in the mainstream cinema, being commonly equated with evil. Serious attempts to deal with such conditions (schizophrenia in Ken Loach's *Family Life*, for instance) are rare exceptions to the rule. For the most part, film-makers have homed in on the area of criminal pathology, and exploited the idea of madness with its titillating overtones of absolute, uncontrollable transgression – in an attempt to provoke ever greater extremes of suspense, while justifying these extremes with a spurious recourse to pseudoscientific authority. I suppose the trend set in when Hollywood discovered Freud in the 1940s: Curtis Bernhardt's *Conflict* (1945) was one of the first films to realise that "Funny things happen inside people's heads." But this discovery was to stand directors in good stead over the ensuing decades, with such psychiatrically-inclined thrillers as *Spellbound* and *The Spiral Staircase*, through the 60s excesses of *Shock Corridor* and *Twisted Nerve*, the genre reaching glossy apogee in the 90s, with *The Silence of the Lambs*.

The best-known and most honourable bucking of this trend came in the mid-70s, with Milos Forman's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Although it offered a tamer, palliated version of Ken Kesey's novel, it still managed to suggest a provocative blurring of the line between madness and sanity – something which Hollywood later did its best to develop in mainstream comedies like *The Couch Trip* and *Crazy People*. More importantly, the film left us in little doubt that it was the zealous enforcement of a repressive power structure (in this case presided over by Nurse Ratched) which should be regarded as the greater madness and the greater evil. Perhaps it needed a director like Forman – a refugee from Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia, whose parents died in the Nazi camps – to bring this idea explicitly to the screen.

On one level, then, Forman's film bears out an observation made by Roy Porter: "The history of madness is the history of power." In the chapter on George III in his *Social History of Madness*, Porter (a friend of Bennett who was offered a walk-on part in the play) usefully reminds us that "from the eighteenth century onwards the idea was increasingly floated that there was actually something *pathological* about the exercise of power itself." As early as 1696, when Jonathan Swift incorporated "A Digression concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth" into *A Tale of a Tub*, he had argued (with magnificent double irony) that madness had been "the Parent of all those mighty Revolutions, that have happened in *Empire*, in *Philosophy* and in *Religion*." Famously defining happiness as "a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived", he claimed that the lucky lunatic "creams off Nature, leav-



ing the Sower [i.e. sour] and the Dregs for Philosophy and Reason to lap up", thereby ascending to "The Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves."

There are disappointments in store for anyone seeking this vein of ironic radicalism in the screen version of Bennett's play. Although Nigel Hawthorne spends most of the film behaving very much like a fool among the assorted knaves in his circle of ministers and physicians, his condition is anything but serene and peaceful: the King's insanity manifests itself as scatological gibbering, requiring him to be forcibly gagged, tied down, straitjacketed and subjected to a succession of shockingly primitive medical treatments. Finally, of course, a cure is found. The film ends with the beaming Monarch and his family waving at us from the steps of St Paul's, so that it traces an unashamedly traditional comic pattern: order, followed by chaos, followed by order restored. While this may be dramatically satisfying, it does raise questions both about the extent to which Hawthorne's performance dominates (or even hijacks) the proceedings, and about Bennett's own conception of the relationship between madness and power. In short, *The Madness of King George* seems to be asking us to do something rather peculiar: namely, to accept that the return to power of someone who was (as the film cannot help making pretty clear) an intolerant despot should be regarded as some sort of happy ending.

How, exactly, has it managed to paint itself into this particular corner? There's no doubt that Bennett feels a certain sentimental ►



Signs of power: the eighteenth century battleground of Parliament where Pitt takes on Fox, top; Ian Holm as Willis, the doctor who cures the King, middle right; the whispering of the court ladies, among them Amanda Donohoe as Lady Pembroke, middle left; the dignified family portrait, bottom



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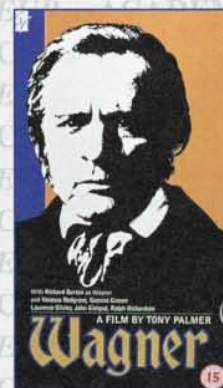
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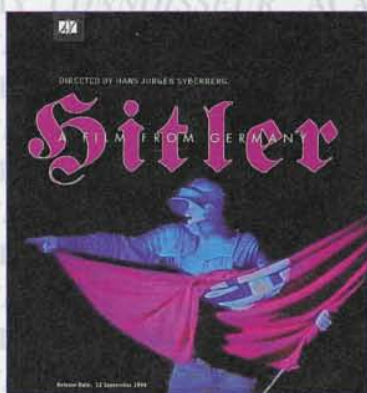
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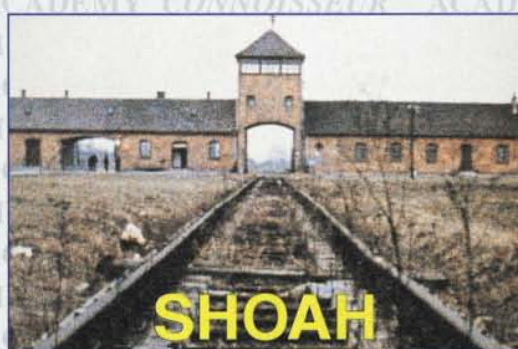


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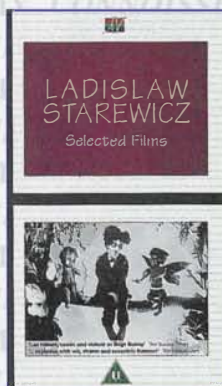


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◀ attachment not only to the King himself ("I've always had a soft spot for George III," he writes in his introduction to the published play) but to the very idea of monarchy. He came clean about this in a recent essay about the making of the film for the *London Review of Books*: "I found I was less sceptical about the monarchy as an institution than most of the production team, partly because... I was older than most of them and more set in my ways. Certainly I'm no republican." His "soft spot" finds its expression in some of the screenplay's more whimsical Bennettisms: notably the bedtime dialogues of Hawthorne and Helen Mirren (Queen Charlotte), who refer to each other affectionately as "Mr King" and "Mrs King" – a detail which at my screening drew the first real waves of sympathetic audience laughter.

What has been lost in the play's transfer to the screen, meanwhile, is its adroit balance between personal and political narratives. Properly mindful of the need for a clean, agile narrative trajectory, Bennett has been obliged to jettison most of his political baggage, and the sense of a teeming, complex network of unstable party and personal loyalties has vanished. Instead we have Pitt versus Fox – the former here both cold fish and good egg, the latter played with an air of dark, saturnine menace by Jim Carter. This menace makes Fox the most imposing historical heavy since F. Murray Abraham's Bernardo Gui in *The Name of the Rose*: Carter's every appearance floods the screen like a pool of inky blackness, and he prowls through the film wearing such a delicious scowl that it can't be long before Hollywood drafts him in as resident villain. As a result we barely register the fact that his character, Charles James Fox, is historically considered to be humane and progressive, struggling in the teeth of Royal opposition to introduce a programme of reform which includes the abolition of the slave trade. Instead, faced with such a gloriously sinister opponent, the King starts to look even more vulnerable and loveable.

For Nigel Hawthorne's George is loveable: so loveable that this too does a certain violence to history. Without doubt, it's a mesmerising and heartbreaking performance, and one which



Down among the melancholy: Nigel Hawthorne as King George, with his women, without his Royal apparel

holds the film together. It will surprise many British filmgoers who only know Hawthorne from his performance

as the Machiavellian Sir Humphrey Appleby in *Yes, Minister*, although that character can't help coming back to haunt the memory here from time to time. Nicholas Hytner, the director, seems slightly embarrassed by the ghost of sitcom which stalks the film, and keeps trying to raise the tone with baroque camera flourishes and visual allusions to *King Lear* – Hawthorne running amok on a heath wearing only his nightshirt, and so on.

This is all very well, but as I recall, *Yes, Minister* actually offered much more insight into the distribution of power within the British establishment, largely because it was under no pressure to target itself at anything but a British audience. The really significant thing about Hawthorne's performance, after all, is the extent to which it has given the film international – for which read American – appeal. Like Hugh Grant's star turn in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, it seems to have scored a direct hit on the G-spot for American audiences. One explanation for this

might lie in Bennett's own screenplay, which lays great weight on the problematic relationship between the American colonists and their colonial masters. In their bitter struggle to free themselves from George III's sovereignty, we can see the origin of the complex American response towards the upper- or ruling-class Englishman, of which he is their villainous archetype. We gain a fresh sense of how deep-rooted the feelings are, and how thoroughly compounded of awe and contempt.

Over the last few years Hollywood has battled to cope with these icy, autocratic figures by casting them as villains pure and simple, in the shape of Hawthorne, Alan Rickman, Jeremy Irons and others. No credible equivalent had been found for the plummy but plucky and like-

able Brits (Ronald Colman, David Niven) we used to export so successfully. Recently, however, the British cinema has discovered how to market a new, friendlier variety which delivers the Americans from their memories of thralldom, offering them a delicious sensation of release which seems to translate itself immediately into box office returns and Oscar nominations. What we have now learned, in a word, is how to *demystify* our ruling class for the benefit of American audiences. And so Hugh Grant manages to portray an upper-crust bachelor, not as the expected unemotional, cold-blooded enigma, but as a flustered romantic who quotes David Cassidy lyrics and says "fuck" nine times in the first scene as if he had found himself in a BBC-accented Tarantino movie; and George III, in the hands of Bennett and Hawthorne, is no longer an unbending tyrant obsessed by tradition and protocol, but a sweet, befuddled old man who calls his wife "Mrs King" and never breaks wind in bed without an apologetic "Saving your presence I will try a fart."

From what Bennett has written about it in the *London Review* and elsewhere, the making of *The Madness of King George* has been a history of compromises. The resulting film is highly enjoyable, intelligent, good to look at, beautifully acted – but there is an irony at its heart more cutting than any its author can have intended. The project may have started out, many years ago, as an accurate recreation of an episode in British political history and an exploration of the strange affinity between madness and power; but it now reaches the screen as a handsome piece of Heritage Cinema, chock full of English pageantry and stately homes, and, in its final reassuring insistence that the Royal soap opera will run and run, unequivocally committed to the status quo. The American studios now call the financial shots, and it seems that they will allow us to tell our own stories, but only on their terms. It is the terrible and continuing revenge of the colonists on their erstwhile oppressors.

'The Madness of King George' is released on March 24 and is reviewed on page 47 of this issue



Court intrigues: John Wood as Thurlow, Lord Chancellor, right, one of the plotters in King George's court

Discworld

Philip Kemp

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By rights, *Cinemania '95* ought to carry a health warning: *this disc can seriously damage your work schedule*. Regular old movie reference books were bad enough, luring the unwary into hours of self-indulgent browsing; but *Cinemania*, which positively invites us to surf happily from entry to entry, pursuing endless chains of cross-references, could easily eat up days of otherwise productive time. Further enticements are the film clips, dialogue extracts and music scores, tempting us with Gable not giving a damn, with HAL's dying speech, or with Erich Korngold's soaring theme from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.

Unquestionably, *Cinemania* is hours of fun. But is it useful? Here, the famous GIGO principle of programming applies: Garbage In, Garbage Out. Not that everything that's gone into *Cinemania* is garbage, by a long way, but since it includes no original material of its own it's stuck with the limitations of its sources. Essentially, the data-base is a distillation of half a dozen or so reference books: Leonard Maltin's *Movie and Video Guide*, Roger Ebert's *Video Companion*, Pauline Kael's *5001 Nights at the Movies*, Baseline's *Motion Picture Guide* and *Encyclopedia of Film*, Ephraim Katz's *Film Encyclopedia* (the latest edition is reviewed in this issue) and James Monaco's *How to Read a Film*. All American, all firmly set in the critical mainstream. No room here for even the moderate quirkiness of an Andrew Sarris or a David Thomson (whose *Biographical Dictionary* is also reviewed below).

There are three main indexes: 'Movies' (some 19,000 of them), 'People' (4000+) and 'Topics' (850+). The programme can then subdivide each of these under further multiple headings, singling out anything from 'Actors, American, Male' (lots) to 'Cine-matographers, Female' (none). 'Topics' is a grab-bag, covering critical terms (*mise-en-scène*, black comedy), historical summaries (Brazilian cinema), production companies, film series and a good deal else. There's also a 'Multimedia Gallery' that includes all the stills, clips and snatches of music, and an 'Award List', which can be sliced according

to year, category, film or personality. (All it covers, though, is the Oscars.)

Since *Cinemania's* on CD-ROM (Read Only Memory), you can't amend or update the contents, which is too bad since they're not always quite up to date or accurate. The editor of *Sight and Sound* will be gratified that it's one of only two film journals to rate an entry (*Cahiers du cinéma* being the other), but surprised to learn that he edits a quarterly. And when it comes to the category lists, the unfulfillable urge to scribble in the margins becomes overwhelming. 'Animators', for example, includes Earl Hurd and Segundo de Chomón (you may well ask) while leaving out *inter alia* Yuri Norstein, Bob Godfrey and Ladislav Starewicz. And the selection of music is largely dictated by what took Best Song Oscar in its year; so in the absence of Walton's score for *Henry V*, you can console yourself with Bing Crosby singing 'Sweet Leilani' from *Waikiki Wedding* (1937).

This eccentricity of choice verges on sheer perversity in the 'Cinemania Suggests' section. The idea is, you pick the style of movie you want to watch, and the programme will throw up 25 options. That 23 of the 'All-Time Comedy Classics' are from Hollywood isn't too surprising; but all the rest of the globe can contribute is *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* and Truffaut's *L'Argent de poche*. At times, one wonders if someone isn't quietly taking the piss: the category 'Stirring, Uplifting' includes John Hughes's piffling teen comedy *Sixteen Candles*, and under 'Serious Fare' there lurks *The Man with the Golden Gun* – not just a Bond film, but a Roger Moore Bond film?

The inanities of 'Cinemania Suggests' aren't likely to attract – except as a source of derision – the kind of serious buff who might be interested in a résumé of Czech cinema history or the titles of the films Peter Lorre made before M. By comparison, the giant bucket of popcorn adorning the cover of Paramount's *Movie Select* at least implies single-mindedness. Far less ambitious in scope than *Cinemania*, *Movie Select* is little more than a list of popular films, each one given a short, archly-written plot summary in which All The Words Have Initial Capitals, Which Gets Rather Irritating.

Personalities are listed in a section called 'Hollywood Guide', which interprets the term 'Hollywood' very strictly: Beverly Aaland and Lee Aaker (to look no further than the Aa's) get in, while Alec Guinness doesn't. Filmographies consist of an incomplete list of films, undated and in no particular order. *Movie Select* also has a "suggestions for further viewing" feature, a fairly cumbersome process which involves you nominating three favourite movies. I chose *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Seven Samurai* and *Les Enfants du paradis*, and was told I'd enjoy *The Producers*. If this is an 'Intelligent' Guide, I'd hate to meet a stupid one.

Both programmes are straightforwardly laid out and easy to get the hang of, even for technologically challenged computer users like me. If your set-up already boasts a high-speed CD-ROM slot, a sound system and twin speakers, *Cinemania* is entertaining, fairly useful, offers far more than *Movie Select* and costs less. But if not, it's hardly worth splashing out £1,000 or so for the extra facilities just yet. The equipment will get cheaper, the discs almost certainly better. S & S wishes to thank Gateway 2000 for the loan of their Pentium

Fresh slogans

Philip Strick

The Film Encyclopedia

Ephraim Katz (ed), HarperCollins, £30 (hb) 1496pp ISBN 0-333-61601-4

A Biographical Dictionary of Film

David Thomson, Andre Deutsch, £25.00 (hb) 834pp ISBN 0-233-98859-9

For beginners, the Katz *Encyclopedia* is the place to start. Copiously updated since its first edition (1979), it holds concise answers to all the questions that might reasonably be asked about the history, the people and the jargon of cinema, with entries on screenwriters, special effects, studio equipment and film production on a country-by-country basis from the earliest years to the present. A courageous enterprise encompassing the essentials within a single massive but not unmanageable volume, it will tell you who invented the term 'the seventh art', when to use a changing bag, the cause of pincushion distortion and the significance of chronotography, alongside a listing of the main Academy Award winners from 1927 to 1993, the story of *Cinema Novo*, a guide to the f-stop and notes about top box-office receipts, silent speed and the merits of *Sight and Sound*.

The Katz approach is crisp and unbiased; a diplomatic choice of adjectives allows for the rise or fall of reputations still likely to prove volatile, but established icons go unchallenged, and films are seldom evaluated – or even described – in more than bland and cursory phrases. A guide to popular reaction more than critical opinion, the *Encyclopedia* contains huge lists of films, together with alternative titles and release dates, but nonetheless modestly makes no claim to being comprehensive. As a result, many of the careers it records are disconcertingly abbreviated: none of Beverly Garland's appearances for Roger Corman are credited, for instance, and there is no mention of *La Belle Noiseuse* in Emmanuelle Béart's filmography nor of Geraldine Chaplin's work in *The Age of Innocence*.

Cross-referencing is also not all that it might be: the welcome Allen Smithee entry overlooks *Catchfire* and while Lawrence Tierney and Tim Roth get into *Reservoir Dogs*, Steve Buscemi doesn't. The remarkable Allison Hayes is acknowledged for her performance in *Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman* but Nathan Juran Hertz gets no credit for it as director. Part of the encyclopaedist's problem, is deciding whether to include telefilms, those hybrids that have been known to emerge into theatrical distribution. And in describing actors who similarly weave their way between the large and the small screen he has to make some fine distinctions: why, for example, mention *The Singing Detective* but not *Edge of Darkness* when reporting (if needs must) the career of Joanne Whalley; why omit the mini-series *The Martian Chronicles* from among Rock Hudson's final appearances?

There are the usual gremlins: Keaton now stars in *The Railroad*, and there is a horror film called *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and David Lowell Rich's films have undergone an unfortunate fusion (*That Man the Concorde?*). More seriously, Katz seems under the impression that *Elstree Calling* was "a musical spoof of Shakespeare's *The Taming of*

Fun and games:
François Truffaut's
'L'Argent de poche'





Honolulu for two: Bing Crosby woos Shirley Ross in 'Waikiki Wedding'

the *Shrew*, which is a little wide of the mark, while Hitchcock's two Ministry of Information shorts are mistakenly listed as documentaries (and *Aventure Malgache* is misspelt, as so often). It might also be remarked that the entries for Harold Becker, John Laurie and James Horner are disappointingly brief, that Ray Harryhausen has disclaimed any involvement with *Trog*, and that mention of *Dóna Herlinda* and *Her Son* might helpfully have included Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, the Mexican film-maker of considerable international reputation.

If, despite his immensity of achievement, Katz at times falls short of completism, David Thomson's *Biographical Dictionary* cheerfully disregards any, whatever their claims to fame, who have failed over the years – or as newcomers – to convince the author of their worth. Only the excuse for a good subversive grumble, one feels, has driven Thomson even to bother with Ford or Capra – or Tarkovsky, whose *Solaris* he finds much less engaging than a *Star Trek* episode on the same theme. Directors neither Thomson nor Katz have time or space for in their current editions include Hal Hartley, Atom Egoyan, Takeshi Kitano and Jan Svankmajer, and while excuses could doubtless be rustled up for all of these the absence from Thomson's book of Beineix, Bigelow, Carax, Erice, Ferrara, Tarantino, Zanussi and a whole army of others does suggest a certain wilfulness of discrimination.

A first comment on the *Biographical Dictionary*, with its scrupulous lists of titles and dates (unlike Katz, it credits directors in actors' filmographies, invaluable) must accordingly be that despite appearances it is autobiography; Thomson recollecting in a series of undisguised memoirs a life devoted to discussing cinema. Unlike Katz's, Thomson's entries are anything but dispassionate; they are written in anger and affection, sorrow and exasperation. They agonise over reputations that are indefensible or have remained unrecognised, and are indignant over legends too long unquestioned. Tackling Dennis Hopper, for example, Thomson overlooks *American Dreamer* but explodes sat-

isfyingly over *Easy Rider*: "a disaster in the history of film to set beside the loss of Technicolor, the invention of gross participation, the early death of Murnau, and the longevity of Richard Attenborough." Jacques Tati, he says, "moves with the tendentious vagueness of a monk, garbed in salvation but not visibly human." Kieślowski's films, he says, "seem to think they're perfect, and I want to scream."

For beginners, then, the *Biographical Dictionary* is no place to start, for all that it has a full complement of solid, workmanlike entries on the usual big names and a fair quota of the lesser ones. It is less than endearing in its personal notes – the piece on James Toback done as a letter from a friend, the promotion of Thomson's own novel while dismissing Capra – and rather bewildering in its more unlikely appraisals ("Donna Reed first impressed upon me the trade of whoring"). To read about Sharon Stone, the average student does not expect to have to find and consult an essay on Frances Farmer.

But this is not intended for average students: it is intended for filmgoers who like a good solid argument, and also for those in need of a hearty kick in the prejudices. There is a point in every film fan's life at which the habitual allegiances call for some fresh slogans, and Thomson is enjoyably and eloquently full of them.

Well-bound white sheets

Jane Giles

Images In The Dark: An Encyclopedia of Gay and Lesbian Film and Video

Raymond Murray TLA Publications, £15.99, 573pp ISBN 1 880707 01 2

In the words of the author, this new encyclopaedia aims to be "the first comprehensive compilation on the contribution of queers to the art and commerce of film-making". Featuring more than 3000 reviews and 200 biographies organised in nine well-illustrated thematic chapters, the book looks set to quickly become a key specialist reference guide but also, perhaps, an unwitting source of contention in the debates about representations of homosexuality.

A 'straight' film guide usually has pages the texture of cheap toilet paper and is liable to fall apart within a week. *Images in the Dark* has much higher production values, being crisply typeset on smooth, well-bound white sheets. Immensely readable, the text is both informative and entertaining. Murray's reviews are warm and knowing without being cryptic, his choice of quotes is excellent and even the typos are witty (Gas Van Sant). The writing does, however, lack the critical edge expected of film guides; as example, see the one-note reviews of Pedro Almodóvar's films.

Brief portraits of peripheral personalities spice up the format, while Chapter Three is an ingenious interlude, featuring films related to various writers, artists, dancers and composers who are either gay or have "contributed greatly to a queer presence in the arts". But the main biographies tend to tread familiar ground, in particular the short chapter on 'Gay Icons' which offers no surprises (Judy Garland, Madonna *et al*),

and it is disappointing that there is so little delineation of gay context (such as the queer appeal of certain film stars). The massive task of compiling film shorts has been sensibly cut down to the inclusion of titles of particular historical relevance (such as Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour*), the work of established directors (George Kuchar, for example) and video-compilation programmes (betraying the encyclopaedia's origin as a reference guide to lesbian and gay films available on video in the US). With its inevitable bias towards North American and European films stated up front, the book makes no claims to being complete or objective. The author notes that he has "ignored titles in which the film required excessive interpretation in order to arrive at a queer reading", citing the films of John Woo (although I think that Woo's films, with a host of others, such as *Top Gun*, could be usefully referenced in just a couple of salient and provocative sentences). However, neither the disclaimers nor the light-hearted editorial tone should obscure the fact that very few films seem to be missing from this extensive tome.

There is no doubt that the compilation of so many titles constitutes a formidable and invaluable achievement. More contentious is the approach to categorisation. The author argues for "accurate, sensitive and relevant representation of queers in mainstream cinema", paring away problematic titles from the lesbian and gay interest chapters, and assigning them to the 'Queer', 'Transgender' or 'Camp' sections (the latter being dubbed "the most politically incorrect but most entertaining chapter"). The final mop-up, a section called 'Honorable and Dishonorable Mentions', features mainstream films in which lesbian and gay characters are featured for better or – more usually – for worse.

But this strategy of thematic categorisation is not only (politically) divisive; it also makes the films much harder to find: apparently *Emmanuelle* is 'Of Lesbian Interest', but such camp classics as *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* and *Reform School Girls* are not, while *Basic Instinct* is 'Of Queer Interest'. 'Having lost its power to offend', *Cruising* is no longer dishonourable but 'Of Gay Male Interest'. Similarly, the author subdivides Chapter One into 'Favorite Directors' and 'Favorite Independent Directors' without clearly explaining the difference.

This seems an unnecessary complication, particularly given the personalities involved (Derek Jarman and Monika Treut in the former category; Todd Haynes and Ulrike Ottinger in the latter). Cross-referencing facilities are vital for a book of this size, so the more lists the better. Thematic indexes rather than thematic chapters might have been a more useful way to manage so many titles. Even though indexes can become unwieldy, given such a large number of films, it seems a mistake to have made the index of directors so selective (with such 'unworthies' as Bob Kellett and Russ Meyer nowhere listed).

It seems strange that such an unpretentious encyclopaedia should opt for these somewhat user-unfriendly chapter and index systems. In practice this makes it harder to dip into quickly; but it does stimulate the tendency to browse thoroughly, at which point one really starts to appreciate the furthest reaches of the subject.



Love all: 'Emmanuelle'

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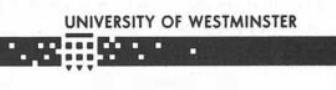
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Neither Mozart nor Hendrix

My career in film music began, like many good things, by accident. It was not so much a baptism by fire as an occult induction into the world of cinematic gore. I had trained for many years as a classical pianist, but with the inspiration of Jimi Hendrix I had picked up a guitar and entered the land of feedback and tight trousers. In 1985 my band was well known in Italy, and I was introduced to Dario Argento at a party in Rome. Dario stunned me by asking if I could start work on his film the next day and I drunkenly agreed. So with a hangover and no experience I showed up at the recording studio to watch clips from *Phenomena*. In the days that followed, I was to experience for the first time what true obsession might mean in film-making.

The first cue that I was given was a sequence in which a girl was chased by one of Dario's many psychopaths down a tunnel into a large vat of sewage and body parts. I was uplifted. For the first time I saw the incredible possibilities of film music. This needn't be Mozart and it needn't be Hendrix. This was a new in-between world where regular music metre was unimportant, where the rhythm of a piece could be dictated by the pace of the images that I was breathlessly watching. A place where sound could be explored to the full, beyond the conventional instrumentation of an orchestra or a rock band.

Throughout the first day, Dario nervously played with a small object in his hand. Eventually he dropped it and I retrieved it from under the console. It was a small child's doll. Quick as a flash, Dario snatched it back from me, held it in front of him as if it were a crucifix and I were a vampire and backed out of the room, muttering "Good luck, good luck." I knew then that this would be an interesting job.

Dario rejected every one of my conventional efforts, until I came up with a sound that was the musical equivalent of running your fingernails down a blackboard. This was achieved with a combination of violin harmonics and scraping a plectrum down the strings of an electric guitar. It was, finally, adjudged "beautiful". Thus began a ten-year preoccupation with finding "beautiful" music for violent images.

If there were an award for obsessional behaviour in film-making, then I think I have worked with some of the world's foremost nominees in this category. One of Dario Argento's main obsessions, it seems to me, is casting as many members of his family as possible in his films and then having them die in ever-more horrific ways. It certainly beats leaving rude notes around the house. (Dario, by the way, is the only person I have ever seen whose own cats repeatedly attack him.)

Whereas Alejandro Jodorowsky seems to be obsessed with the symbolism of helplessness. All of his films have featured inventive triumphs over different kinds of limbllessness. I shall never forget the legless-armless quick-drawing cowboy double act in *El topo*, nor the extended armless image of *Santa sangre*. When asked what was in his mind when he made the latter, Jodorowsky astonished a

Simon Boswell, composer of the music in 'Shallow Grave', recalls the crazy freedoms of soundtrack work with directors Dario Argento and Alejandro Jodorowsky

room full of journalists at Cannes by saying: "I do not make films with my brain but with my testicles."

There are several givens in horror music. The low drone is a universal signpost of tension, a harbinger of impending doom, which will not let the audience off the hook until it is resolved by an action – a genuine scare or a red herring. Sustained notes are the musical equivalent of holding your breath. By interspersing them with percussive hits one can toy with the audience's collective pulse, speeding up or slowing down to raise or lower expectations about what is to follow.

Irregularities in a regular beat can confound and disorientate or simply mislead. A high sustained string note often conveys a more intense and insane threat. The repeated, high shriek of violins, made famous in *Psycho*, conveys a manic, terrifying unstoppable – its repetition a figure for the insane logic that drives Anthony Perkins' character.

Argento had allowed me to experiment with many different ways of terrifying people. But Jodorowsky encouraged me to confound the audience's expectations by writing what could be considered inappropriate music for violent images. In *Santa Sangre*, the severing of a character's arms is accompanied by a heavenly choir and tinkling eastern percussion to help a horrific and gory act become a transcendent, religious experience. I was not scoring the violent images but the emotional sub-text, the inner feelings of the character.

Religious music and horror films are not strangers. The dark side is often portrayed as the perverted mirror image of godliness. Bad characters often adopt a missionary zeal in their pursuit of nastiness. The quiet confidence of a truly dangerous character indicates, to me, the proximity of obsessive religious faith and psychopathic behaviour.

The obsessions in my own everyday life are mostly inherited as I move from job to job. As a film composer, I often feel like I have landed in the middle of somebody else's obsession. Usually arriving during post-production, I am introduced to a room full of people who, by their strained expressions, have obviously been through some sort of collective trauma. I notice odd behavioural patterns. They have a tendency to focus on what to an outsider are small, irrelevant points. (I have also noticed this with serious cocaine users – and I'm told crack has a similar effect in the long run.) Most bizarre of all, considering how much time and money they spend doing whatever it is they do, they tend to view and edit their films on tiny screens with worse sound than a 30-year-old Danette. They also, in my personal experience, use the same useless sound system to judge recordings that have cost well over \$200,000. It's all very strange.

But I don't really want to understand everything about film-making, and nor should anyone make me. The composer is probably one of the first outsiders to view early versions of a film and can provide useful insights into its broader canvas. I appreciate being involved in a production from



Album art: Boswell also does music for TV in Italy

its inception. *Hardware*, *Dust Devil*, *Hackers*, *Second Best* – I have worked on all of them from script stage and have had a long time to absorb the material. But when it comes to actually writing the score, I prefer to view the film as a cinema-goer would. That means reacting to it on a first viewing – preferably a final cut that's going to stay that way. The obsessional part of film composing is all to follow: the honing of themes to specific lengths, the interweaving of the melodic elements to make a unified whole. And then my obsessions escalate. Writing the themes is one thing. But as a film is repeatedly changed – always in my experience shortened – my days are filled with rewinding a video tape a hundred times in a morning and re-adjusting the music. This is the time-consuming part of scoring films. The rest of my day is spent flipping through the pages of glossy music-techno magazines searching for that elusive bit of gear or software which will make my job easier. This is known as 'delaying scoring the movie'. The improvement of technology has encouraged an unhealthy obsession with detail in film composing that is highly destructive. Now that we all know what is possible with the synchronisation of film and video to computers and digital editing, there is a constant temptation to overdo things. The amount of control available can lead to an advert-style approach that hits every cut going. Not so much underscoring as underlining in thick black pencil.

One unfortunate by-product of this is to see music as a means of fixing problems in a film. Of course this is traditionally one of its roles. Music can divert attention from a wide variety of things. It can give pace where none exists, it can lend conviction to bad acting. It can be the glue that succeeds where the editor's sticky tape fails. This is all part of the job, but none of this is what a composer wants to be doing. He wants to be taking something amazing and glorifying it, flattering it, enhancing it with music.

In the end, the better the movie the easier the job. I need to be inspired by what I see. With a great film all I have to do is react honestly to what I'm experiencing. A bad film is a lot of hard work – but someone's got to do it. And besides, nobody makes bad films, do they?

A complete filmography of Boswell's soundtrack work appears on page 62 of this issue



Armless?: 'Santa Sangre'

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films plus selected independent British films, re-releases and video releases

An Awfully Big Adventure

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Mike Newell

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Martin O'Malley
Mick Walsh

Script Supervisor
Noel Byrne

Casting
Susie Figgis

Screenplay
Charles Wood

Based on the novel by
Beryl Bainbridge

Script Supervisor
Laerke Sigfred Pederson

Script Editor
Steve Matthews

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Camera Operators
Des Whelan
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Ann Buchanan

Title Design
Chris Allies

Music
Richard Hartley

Songs
"You Make Me Feel So Young" by Mack Gordon, Josef Myrow;

"Spread a Little Happiness" by Vivian Ellis;

"When I Take My Sugar to Tea" by Sammy Fain, Irving Kahal, Pierre Norman;

"Two Sleepy People" by Hoagy Carmichael, Frank Loesser;

"Let it Snow, Let it Snow" by Sammy Cahn, Jule Styne;

"Every Time We Say Goodbye" by Cole Porter

Sound Editors
Sue Baker

Dialogue:
Derek Holding
Brian Blamey

Foley Editor
Philip Alton

Sound Mixers
Peter Sutton
Music:
Phil Chapman
Sound Re-recording Mixer
Peter Maxwell
Theatre Adviser
Blaithin Sheeran
Stunt Co-ordinator
Martin Grace

Cast
Alan Rickman
P. L. O'Hara
Hugh Grant
Meredith Potter
Georgina Cates
Stella
Alan Armstrong
Uncle Vernon
Peter Firth
Bunny
Prunella Scales
Rose
Rita Tushingham
Aunt Lily
Alan Cox
Geoffrey
Edward Petherbridge
Richard St Ives
Nicola Pagett
Dotty Blundell
Carol Drinkwater
Dawn Allenby
Clive Morrison
Desmond Fairchild
Gerard McSorley
George
Ruth McCabe
Grace Bird
James Frain
John Harbour
Pat Laffan
Mr Harcourt
Patti Love
Mary Deare
Hilary Reynolds
Babs Osbourne
Tom Hickey
Freddie Reynal
Robbie Doolin
Reporter
Brendan Conroy
Disley
Johnny Murphy
One Eye
Peter O'Farrell
Long John Silver
Agnes Bernelle
Mrs Ackerly
Larry Murphy
Inspector
Vicky Curtis
Ellen
Brian McGrath
Vicar
Padraig O'Raghallaigh
GPO Clerk
Nick Grennell
Actor
Willie Smith
Empire Stage Manager
Katy O'Donnell
Young Stella
Kate O'Malley
Baby Stella
Earl Gill
John Drummond
Chris Kenevey
Jack Bayle
Rolf Kholman
Band
Horace Hessey
Betty Casey
Singers
Paddy Casey
Pianist

10.077 feet
112 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Metrocolor

Liverpool, 1941: nine-year-old Stella Bradshaw stands clapping with delight at the spectacle of a night-time air-raid. Her Uncle Vernon drags her into a shelter. Liverpool, 1947: with misgivings, Vernon and his wife Lily arrange for Stella to have an audition at the Playhouse theatre. Unimpressed by her prepared speech but amused by her pretensions, the company's director Meredith Potter and his stage manager Bunny take her on as an unpaid assistant stage manager. Stella phones her absent mother, Renee, to report her success.

Besotted by Meredith, Stella learns to her dismay that he has a lover, Hilary, in London. She is befriended by George, the set designer, but resented by her fellow ASM, Geoffrey, who makes a clumsy pass at her. Watchful but naive, she misreads much of what she sees, failing to realise that actress Dawn Allenby is nursing a hopeless passion for leading man Richard St Ives, or that Geoffrey, briefly seduced by Meredith, has been thrown over for juvenile lead John Harbour. To her delight, she is cast in a minor role in *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

After Dawn, drunk and hysterical, is dismissed from the company, Stella inadvertently causes St Ives, playing Caesar, to trip and break his leg. The play's run is terminated and the next production, *Peter Pan*, in which St Ives was to play Hook, is in jeopardy. Rose Lipman, the company manager, sends for her ex-lover P. L. O'Hara, a famous Hook and one-time member of the company. The first night, with O'Hara as Hook and Stella manipulating a torch and mirror to represent Tinkerbell, is a triumph. At the celebratory party O'Hara dances with Stella, then takes her back to his digs and beds her.

The affair continues, although Stella is still obsessed with Meredith. A football match is arranged with another troupe who are putting on *Treasure Island*. Acting as referee Meredith humiliates Geoffrey, who punches his nose. O'Hara warns Meredith against his treatment of Geoffrey, but Meredith retorts that O'Hara is having sex with a minor. Stella, devastated to learn that Hilary is a man, walks out on O'Hara; seeking her at her house, he sees a picture of Renee and realises that Stella is his daughter. Rushing to the docks where he last saw Renee he slips and drowns. Meredith goes on in his place as Hook. To report all this to her mother, Stella phones the speaking clock - whose voice Renee recorded before she vanished for good.

Mike Newell's film, and the Beryl Bainbridge novel on which it is based, borrows not only its title but many of its themes from JM Barrie's *Peter Pan*, that most disquieting of children's classics. Absent mothers, incestuous father figures doubling as oppressive villains, the lure of fantasy and the betrayal of innocence are reflected and distorted in the tawdry, precarious world of post-war provincial rep. "The whole play's about innocence, not exploitation," says P. L.

O'Hara, reproaching Meredith for his treatment of Geoffrey, but he's wrong: Barrie's play, like Newell's film, is about both. In the final scene Meredith (who has taken over the role of Captain Hook after O'Hara's death) stands on stage announcing "'Tis my hour of triumph." The hero-as-villain has been supplanted by the villain-as-villain, and between them innocence has lost out.

It is death, in Peter Pan's line, that "will be an awfully big adventure". The tone of the film, haunted as it is by death and loss, is far darker than that of Newell's most recent work, recalling that before he diverged into feyness (*Into the West*) and self-conscious charm (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Enchanted April*) he made his name with his biopic of Ruth Ellis, *Dance with a Stranger*. With its drab, claustrophobic settings, vivid period sense and insight into the clash of social conventions, *Adventure* is closer in mood and texture to *Dance with a Stranger* than anything else Newell has directed since.

What it lacks, unfortunately, is the earlier film's narrative lucidity. Bainbridge's novel isn't long but it is rich in detail; perhaps in an attempt to recreate that richness, or with the aim of refracting events through Stella's uncomprehending gaze, the story now and then lapses into incoherence. Key characters are perfunctorily introduced and several crucial plot points are so fudged that they're unlikely to make sense to anyone who hasn't read the book. *An Awfully Big Adventure* had a long, troubled genesis (the BBC, for whom it was originally being produced, withdrew its commitment eight weeks before pre-production); it may be that during that period the film's makers got so close to their material they overlooked the needs of audiences coming to it cold.

Yet, despite the confusion, *Adventure* boasts some superb ensemble acting, with especially fine performances from Peter Firth, pink and spongy as the wretchedly put-upon Bunny, and Georgina Cates with her scrubbed face, avidly courting corruption ("I'm beginning to get the hang of fucking," she informs the nonplussed O'Hara). And Hugh Grant, a downturned rictus of contempt clamped on his face, plays Meredith with such relish as to suggest that his true *métier* may not be lovable ditherers, but fastidious villains in the Claude Rains mode.

Above all, there's the atmosphere. Liverpool having been disastrously modernised, most of the film was shot in Dublin which, as Newell rather tactlessly observes, "has a real smell of times past". Even so, he took full advantage of it, and much of the film seems permeated with a dank, evocative effluvium compounded of greasypaint, damp digs and overcooked stodge. As a story the film falters, but as a recreation of a lost milieu it's exact. *An Awfully Big Adventure*, it is safe to bet, won't come within miles of the headlong success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, but for all its flaws it's the more intriguing film.

Philip Kemp

Before Sunrise

USA 1995

Director Richard Linklater

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Castle Rock

Entertainment presents

A Detour Film

production

In association with

Filmhaus

Executive Producer

John Sloss

Producer

Anne Walker-McBay

Co-producers

Ellen Winn Wendt

Gerrit Schaffler

Wolfgang Ramm

Associate Producer

Gregory Jacobs

Production Co-ordinator

Uli Halbritter

Production Manager

Bernhard Schmatz

Location Managers

Kurt "Mingo" Krusche

Axl Newkirk

Assistant Directors

E. Otto Sperl

John Buche

Casting

Judy Henderson

Alycia Aumuller

Austria:

Regina Schlagnitweit

LA Associates:

Lisa Pantone

James Pantone

NY Associates:

Chloe Ernst

Screenplay

Richard Linklater

Kim Krizan

Script Supervisor

Monika von Manthey

Director of Photography

Lee Daniel

Steadicam Operator

Paul Alexander

Editor

Sandra Adair

Production Designer

Florian Reichmann

Costume Design

Florentina Welley

Make-up/Hair Stylist

Karen Duns

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music Consultant

Ariane Fishbach

Songs/Music Extracts

"Dancing with Da Ra"

by and performed by

Loud; "Come Here" by

Loud; "Yakety Sax" by

Boots Randolph; James

Rich., performed by

Boots Randolph;

"Anti Body" by and

performed by Fetish 69;

"The Human Pump"

by and performed

by Harald Waiglein;

"Trapeze" by Herbie

Christie, performed by

Lou Christie; "Living

Life" by Daniel

Johnston, performed

by Kathy McCarty;

"Dido and Aeneas"

by Henry Purcell,

performed by Academy

of the Bejnhof;

"Sona ta No. 8 in

C Minor, Opus 13

(Pathétique) Rondo:

Allegro" by Ludwig van

Beethoven, performed

by Istvan Szekeley;

"Concerto in B-flat

Major for Violin and

Oboe with Ripieno

Strings, RV 548" by

Antonio Vivaldi,

performed by the

Aulos Ensemble;

"Vienna Blood" by

Johann Strauss,

performed by Barbara

Klebel, Wolfgang

Staribacher; "Variatio

25" (from "The Gold-

berg Variations") by

Johann Sebastian Bach,

performed by Wolfgang

Glück; "Adante" (from

"Sonata No. 1 in G

Major, BWV 1027")

by Johann Sebastian

Bach, performed by

Yo Yo Ma, Kenneth

Cooper

Supervising Sound Editor

Tom Hammond

Dialogue Editor

Chip Ritter

Foley Editor

Todd Toon

Sound Mixer

Thomas Szabolcs

ADRMixer

Reilly Steele

Foley Mixer

Steve Jaskowski

Dolby stereo

consultant

Douglas Greenfield

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Larry Seyer

Sound Effects Editor

Wayne Bell

Foley Artists

Ossama Khuluki

Chris Moriana

Avid Consultant

Peter Fahrngruber

Cast

Ethan Hawke

Jesse

Julie Delpy

Céline

Andrea Eckert

Wife on Train

Hanno Pöschl

Husband on Train

Karl Bruckschwaiger

Tex Rubinowitz

Guys on Bridge

Erni Mangold

Palm Reader

Dominik Castell

Street Poet

Haymon Maria Buttinger

Bartender

Harold Waiglein

Guitarist in Club

Bilge Jeschim

Belly Dancer

Kurti

Percussionist

Hans Weingartner

Liese Lyon

Peter H. Huemer

Otto Reiter

Hubert Fabian Kulterer

Branko Andric

Constanze Schweiger

John Sloss

Alexandra Seibel

Georg Schillhammer

Christian Ankowitsch

Wilburg Reiter

Café Patrons

Barbara Klebel

Wolfgang Staribacher

Musicians on Boat

Wolfgang Glück

Harpichord Player

tbccfeet

tbccminutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Anamorphic

Jesse, a young American travelling round Europe, and Céline, a French student, fall into conversation on the train between Budapest and Vienna. When the train reaches Vienna, Jesse, who is getting off there to catch a flight back to America the following morning, persuades Céline to come with him so they can continue talking while wandering about the city.

On a bridge, they briefly encounter two Austrian actors who invite them to a play about a cow. On a tram, Jesse suggests a question and answer session so that he and Céline can learn more about each other. In a record shop, Céline plays Jesse a folk record in the listening booth. They visit the Friedhof der Namenlosen, where bodies washed up on the banks of the Danube are buried. Riding on the Ferris Wheel in the Prater amusement park at sunset, they kiss. At an outdoor café, Céline has her palm read by an old woman, but Jesse is sceptical about her predictions. Walking by the river, they are stopped by a homeless man who writes a poem for them in return for money.

At a nightclub, they discuss previous relationships over a game of pinball. In another café, they play a role-playing game, each pretending to ring up their best friend so that they can discuss their feelings about the other. On a restaurant boat on the Danube they agree not to meet again in the future: they will just enjoy this one night together. At another bar, Jesse, out of money, persuades the barman to give them a bottle of wine; they drink it in the park under the full moon.

Céline tells Jesse she doesn't want to have sex with him now that they are never going to see each other again. At dawn, they hear a man playing the harpsichord and dance in the street. They realise that they forgot to go to the play. As Céline is about to catch her train, they decide to meet at the same place in six months' time. Jesse gets the bus to the airport. Céline, sitting alone on the train, falls asleep.

Like Whit Stillman's *Barcelona*, *Before Sunrise* was backed by Castle Rock, and the two films also share their basic premise: young Americans broaden their minds through encounters with European women in European cities. In fact, the preppy American overheard in *Before Sunrise* complaining about the decadence of European culture as exemplified by poor service in cafés could have strayed in from a Stillman film. On a more general level, though, the two films seem to symbolise a return to European cinema amongst a new generation of American film-makers (Linklater joins Hal Hartley, *Little Odessa's* James Gray, and, at least in terms of his ongoing Godard fixation, Quentin Tarantino).

With its young lovers who talk at length about whether they'll go to bed together, but never actually do, *Before Sunrise* recalls Eric Rohmer, while naming the two characters Céline and Jesse is surely a nod to Jacques Rivette. By Rohmer's standards, Céline and Jesse's marathon conversation may lack philo-

sophical rigour, but it does touch upon a comprehensive range of half-baked twentysomething concerns of the 90s. On the subject of reincarnation, for instance, Jesse wonders how there are enough souls to go round if there are more people alive now than ever before. Meanwhile Céline, the daughter of a 1968 radical turned successful architect, worries that the media are trying to control our minds, and thinks feminism was invented by men so they could sleep around more.

Ideas like these could have come straight out of *Slacker*, but the humour in *Before Sunrise* is much less wild and flaky; working with a co-writer, Kim Krizan (who acted in both *Slacker* and *Dazed And Confused*), Linklater has risen to the challenge of creating whole characters rather than walk-on mouthpieces for wacky opinions. With a cast of two as opposed to the large, free-wheeling ensembles of his first two films - and classical music on the soundtrack instead of grunge or 70s oldies - *Before Sunrise* clearly marks a conscious departure for the director. Yet his underlying interests remain the same; when Jesse first meets Céline on the train, he tells her his idea for a programme for cable access television - a year-long series of 365 24-hour real-time video diaries of ordinary people. What he wants to capture, he explains, is "the poetry of everyday life". Later he finds a soulmate in the riverside poet who offers to write a poem for them using any word they choose - who even manages to make something of Céline's suggestion, "milkshake".

This is where the film's charm lies, in the balance Linklater strikes between poetry and the everyday. The *Brief Encounter* scenario and some of the situations (the first kiss on the Ferris wheel, drinking wine in the park under a full moon) may be conventionally romantic, but his lovers are refreshingly cynical about love (which, for Jesse, is just "an escape for two people who don't know how to be alone"). Perhaps uniquely for an American film, *Before Sunrise* is about people who are attracted by each other's minds rather than simply by looks or that elusive movie concept, "chemistry". As with Rivette's *Céline and Julie Go Boating*,

there's also a sense that Céline and Jesse exist to fuel each other's imaginary lives. Linklater's interest in alternative realities, brilliantly encapsulated by the speech he delivers himself in *Slacker*, is echoed when Jesse first persuades Céline to get off the train, arguing that it will save her from looking back wistfully on missed opportunities in 20 years' time when her marriage has grown boring. Later in the evening they return to the subject of what they would both be doing if Céline hadn't got off the train (a reminder, perhaps, of Kieslowski's *Blind Chance*, which presents three alternative lives for the hero depending on whether or not he catches a train), while the final shot, of Céline falling asleep on the train, raises the possibility that she may have dreamed the whole thing.

In a conversation piece such as this, much inevitably depends on the actors, and Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy both respond to the looseness of Linklater's approach with their most engaging performances to date. Hawke's reactions are very subtle - his expressions in the record shop booth, when Céline subjects him to a fey folk song by Kath Bloom, encapsulate the feelings of a thousand boyfriends forced to listen to their girlfriends' Tracey Thorn albums. The often po-faced Delpy, meanwhile, reveals a relaxed comic touch, particularly when imitating the California dude Jesse pretends to ring up.

Despite the considerable charm of the actors, however, *Before Sunrise* ultimately stretches itself a little too thin. It's disappointing that the characters never interact with the city; Vienna - like Austin, Texas - certainly has a thriving café culture, but beyond that any other European capital would have done as well. With no conflict to keep Céline and Jesse apart beyond their own whimsical decision never to meet again, the conversation/walk/conversation format does get repetitive. But that only makes the film that much more convincing as an evocation of the first, tentative steps in any relationship, and of the aimless wandering in European cities that is now a youthful rite of passage for the English and American middle classes.

John Wrathall



Accidental tourists: Julie Delpy, Ethan Hawke

Death and the Maiden

United Kingdom/USA/France 1994

Director Roman Polanski

Certificate

18

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Capitol Films

presents

A Mount/Kramer

Production

In Association with

Channel Four Films

Flach Films

With the

Participation of

Canal +

TFI

Executive Producers

Jane Barclay

Sharon Harel

Producers

Thom Mount

Josh Kramer

Co-producers

Bonnie Timmermann

Ariel Dorfman

Associate Producer

Gladys Nederlander

Production Supervisor

Suzanne Wiesenfeld

Production Co-ordinator

Blanche Wiesenfeld

Unit Production Manager

Patrick Gordon

Location Manager

Olivier Lhoste

Spain:

Santi Dalmau

Post-production Supervisor

Kathie Weaver

Assistant Directors

Michel Cheyko

Patrick Boshart

Christophe Gachet

Casting

Mary Selway

Patsy Pollock

Screenplay

Rafael Yglesias

Ariel Dorfman

Based on the play by

Ariel Dorfman

Script Supervisor

Sylvette Baudrot

Director of Photography

Tonino deli Colli

Camera Operator

Jean Harois

Steadicam Operator

Nicola Pecorini

Editor

Herve de Luze

Production Designer

Pierre Guffroy

Art Director

Claude Moesching

Set Dresser

Martina Skala

Cyclorama Painters

Xavier Morange

Frederic Heurlier

Special Effects

Gilbert Pieri

Optical/Digital Effects

Frederic Moreau

Costume Design

Milena Canonero

Costume Supervisor

Germinal Rangel

Make-up

Linda de Vetta

Didier Lavergne

Titles/Opticals

Microfilms/

Frederic Moreau

Music

Wojciech Kilar

Music Performed by

The English Chamber

Orchestra, conducted by

Harry Rabinowitz

Music Producer

Tim Oldham

Music Editor

Andrew Glen

Music Extracts

"String Quartet no.14

in D minor ('Death and

the Maiden') by Franz

Schubert, performed by

the Amadeus Quartet

Sound

Daniel Brisseau

Sound Editor

Laurent Quaglio

Dialogue Editor

Jacqueline Mariani

ADR Editor

Anne de Montangon

Re-recording Mixers

Dean Humphreys

Anne Le Campion

Jean-François Auger

Foley Artist

Laurent Levy

Special Editorial Consultant

Simon Urdell

Cast

Sigourney Weaver

Paulina

Ben Kingsley

Roberto

Stuart Wilson

Gerardo Escobar

Krystina Moya

Dr Miranda's Wife

Jonathan Vega

Rodolphe Vega

Dr Miranda's Sons

Gilberto Cortes

Jorge Cruz

Carlos Moreno

Eduardo Valenzuela

String Quartet Players

Sergio Ortega Alvarado

String Quartet Manager

9.283feet

103 minutes

Dolby Stereo

In colour

Paulina Escobar prepares a meal in her beach house, in an anonymous South American country, while a storm brews. She hears on the radio that her husband Gerardo has been appointed to head a government commission of inquiry into human rights violations committed under the country's former military regime. The electricity supply cuts out. Lighting candles, Paulina takes her meal into the bedroom, having thrown away her husband's. Hearing an approaching car, she extinguishes the candles and gets an automatic pistol. She hears her husband thanking someone, and the car

pulls away. Gerardo explains that he had a flat tyre and was lucky enough to be picked up by a near-neighbour. He tells her he has not yet made up his mind about the commission; she knows he is lying. It is revealed that Paulina herself was a victim of torture. They go to bed.

Shortly afterwards, Paulina hears a car again and then a knock on the door. Gerardo answers, it is the neighbour, Doctor Roberto Miranda, returning the spare tyre Gerardo left in the boot of his car. Unnoticed while the two men are getting acquainted, Paulina dresses, packs a small bag with the gun, and drives the doctor's car away. Gerardo assumes she has left him and begins to get seriously drunk, while Miranda offers sympathy.

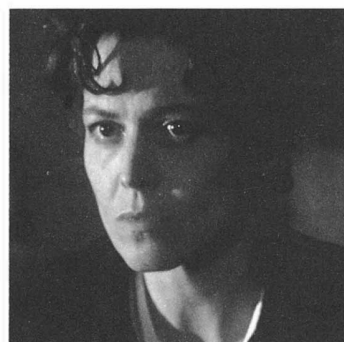
Paulina rolls the car over the edge of a cliff and returns to the house. She finds Miranda asleep on the couch, cracks him across the head, rolls his unconscious body onto a chair, ties him up, removes her knickers and stuffs them in his mouth. She talks to him about her torture, occasionally adopting the voice of her torturer, whom she believes to be Miranda. Reminding him how he used to play Schubert to her, she plays a cassette of 'Death and the Maiden' she found in his car. The music wakes Gerardo, who moves to untie Miranda. But Paulina threatens him with the gun. She says she knows, by his voice and his smell, that Miranda is the same doctor who had raped and tortured her.

Gerardo argues that Paulina's behaviour is no better than that of her torturers. However Paulina intends for Miranda to have a fair trial in their house with Gerardo as his defence attorney. They ungag Miranda; he claims that at the time of Paulina's torture he was working in a Barcelona hospital. He asks Gerardo to check, but the phone line is down.

Paulina promises to let Miranda go once he confesses. She insists that Gerardo owns up to an affair he was having while she was being tortured (it was Gerardo's identity that she was protecting). She tells the full extent of her multiple rape, withheld until now, and then feeds him details for Miranda to sign. Gerardo bullies Miranda into complying, and his 'confession' is videotaped. Paulina reveals that she has trashed Miranda's car and intends to throw him over the cliff after it. While she marches Miranda off to the cliff-edge, Gerardo makes the call to Barcelona, and the story is verified. He tells Paulina, but she knows it's a set-up because she had told Gerardo lies that Miranda amended in his confession. On his knees at the cliff edge, Miranda confesses all. Paulina walks away.

At a concert of Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden', Paulina sees Miranda with his family in a balcony box. As the theme swells, they exchange looks.

That *Death and the Maiden* is probably Roman Polanski's most restrained film to date might not sound like much of a recommendation. After all, Polanski is admired as much



Neurotic edge: Sigourney Weaver

for a flamboyant visual style as his occasional mastery of psychotic and suspenseful moods. Given the wilful tastelessness with which the director approached his last film, *Bitter Moon*, admirers of Ariel Dorfman's play – already a modern classic in terms of its international fame – could be forgiven for fearing the worst. In Polanski's hands a subtle and intricate ensemble piece, with a serious political and moral debate at its core, might be turned into high-anxiety slasher melodrama. Would not the combination of an unravelling guilt-ridden mystery and a possibly unhinged but fully-armed woman prove too tempting to the director of *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*?

Happily, the reverse is true. Polanski is almost too respectful of the play, hoarding just a few shocks for maximum effect: a sudden call from the President when the phone has been dead, a night-shattering blast of heavy metal music when the power comes back on which prompts a struggle for the gun. The problems of mobility, action and imagery associated with adapting plays are dealt with deftly. Dorfman's text has its own share of bombshells and Polanski is properly respectful of these, taking care to give Paulina's more inexplicable actions equal significance to her normal behaviour so that a sense of disquiet builds in momentum.

Dorfman's overarching theme is about whether it is possible to reintegrate not only the victims of a military regime into a new democracy but also their victimisers. His proposition is that torture is first and foremost an invasion of the body, yet he uses a familiar suburban milieu of burst tyres and talk of "my wife's margaritas" to suggest a wider invasion zone. Paulina says at one point: "I want us to live like suburban idiots," but you sense the impossibility of such a life for her.

After the present-day concert footage under the titles and a single shot of surf pounding at the cliff bottom, we see Paulina waiting for Gerardo while a lightning storm builds. There's a neurotic edge to her preparations, as if every task is somehow an imposition. Years after her torture, she still anticipates the knock on the door in the middle of the night. Throughout this lengthy, dialogue-free sequence, her dread and hopelessness is suggested only by Sigourney Weaver's routine actions and Polanski's fluid and beautiful use of montage.

In this way, Polanski removes *Death*

and the Maiden at once from its stage-bound origins. If at times he does get stuck with a shot/reverse shot format (for example, during the couple's mutual confession scene on the terrace), it is only when the dialogue is critical enough to carry the film.

There are many significant departures from the play, most of which improve on it. The timescale is squeezed into one night, giving a tense, real-time pace to the proceedings. Paulina is more decisive, immediately trashing Miranda's car instead of hiding it, and her lines are sharper, finding a vicious wit within the politics of suffering. There's a more conclusive and plausible climax, with Miranda's admission that he had really loved what he was doing and was sorry when it was over – a more extreme admission than the play allows. Shifting the play's location ("probably Chile") to a generalised South American one is the only change that seems a concession.

Having the couple's domestic setup become the site for re-enacting Paulina's ordeal is not just a clever conceit; it allows for multiple ironies. Thus Miranda arrives twice as an apparent Good Samaritan: in the present as the helpful motorist and in the past as the doctor whose job it was to prevent any death by torture – to clean up wounds and play soothing music – before the invitation to join in became intoxicating. The second time around reverses the roles of the powerful and the powerless, with the possibility of Miranda's innocence meant to hang in the air to the very end.

Unfortunately, from the moment that shaven-headed Ben Kingsley walks into the house, acting all weaselly with wobbly eyes (and quoting Nietzsche to boot), there's little doubt he will be proven guilty. But thriller mechanics are hardly at issue here. The drama comes from internal contradictions alive in each of the three characters and the unstable desires thrown up by them. Miranda craves forgiveness in the same way that Paulina craves revenge and neither can be truly satisfied. Similarly, the great liberal reconciler, Gerardo, is fighting for a future normality that it is impossible for his wife to accept.

The three actors walk a fine line between speechifying and naturalism, relishing the moral niceties of the screenplay (co-written by Dorfman and Rafael Yglesias who wrote the wonderful, under-rated Peter Weir film *Fearless*). It is Sigourney Weaver's superb portrayal of Paulina, however, that carries the drama into movieland. She is utterly plausible as a torture victim, and she makes Paulina's mental instability thoroughly logical, eschewing the skittishness that Juliet Stevenson brought to the part on stage. Her gestures and actions command the screen as resolutely here as they did in *Alien* or *Aliens*. As for Polanski, mordant material is meat and drink to him, although in his other films it has not always been as well thought-out as it is here. Restraint becomes him.

Nick James

Drop Zone

USA 1994

Director: John Badham

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Executive Producer

John Badham

Producers

D. J. Caruso

Wallis Nicita

Lauren Lloyd

Co-producer

Doug Claybourne

Associate Producer

Cammie Crier

Production Associate

Susie Peterson

Production Co-ordinator

Yvonne Yaconelli

Drop Zone

Co-ordinators:

Van Van Arsdale

Jeffrey Barabe

Marine Co-ordinator:

C. Ransom Walrod

Unit Production Managers

Burt Buestein

Martin Hornstein

2nd Unit:

Jerald Sobul

Lawrence J. Powell

Location Manager

Kenneth Lavet

2nd Unit:

Sam Tedesco

2nd Unit Director

D. J. Caruso

Assistant Directors

John Hockridge

Joseph J. Kontra

Diana E. Williams

Craig Huston

Kevin Williams

O. Alex Kramarchuk

Casting

Carol Lewis

Associate:

Alison Stuart

Florida:

Yonit Hamer

Voice Casting:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Peter Barsocchini

John Bishop

Story

Tony Griffin

Guy Manos

Peter Barsocchini

Script Supervisor

Barbara Thaxton

2nd Unit:

Corey B. Yugler

Director of Photography

Roy H. Wagner

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Stan McClain

Aerial Photography

Norman Kent

Tom Sanders

Aerial Co-ordinators:

James W. Gavin

Kevin LaRosa

Camera Operators

Gary Huddleston

2nd Unit:

Michael P. McGowan

Michael Ferris

Steadicam Operator

Guy Norman Bee

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Chuck Comisky

Director:

Michael Hofstein

Editor:

Dorre Street

Co-ordinator:

Jessica L. Huebner

Associate:

Joseph De Oliveira

Co-supervisors:

Jim Rygiel

Neil Krepela

Producer:

Jenny Fulle

Digital Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Ariel Velasco Shaw

Coordinator:

Karin Joy

Production Supervisor:

Jamie Price

Computer Graphics Artists

Clint Colver

Croda

Jason Dowdeswell

Michael Fleming

Jim Green

Brian Samuels

Kathi Spencer

Timothy Tompkins

Marc Toscano

Wayne Vincenzi

Computer Effects

Supervisor:

Todd Aron Marks

Designers:

Alex Mann

Harold Mann

Digital Imaging Operator

Chris Edwards

Editor

Frank Morris

Production Designer

Guy Alves

Art Director

Mark W. Mansbridge

Set Design

Thomas Minton

John Leimanis

Set Decorator

Richard C. Goddard

Set Dressers

Florida Unit:

Kurt Beckler

Michael D. Fitzgerald

Jeremy A. Read

Conceptual Artists

Tom Southwell

George Jensen

Model Shop Supervisor

David Jones

Special Effects Supervisor

Danny Cangemi

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Charles Gaspar

2nd Unit:

Jeff Jarvis

Special Effects

Scott E. Forbes

Costume Design

Mary E. Vogt

Costume Supervisor

Dan Bronson

Key:

Jessica S. Fasan

2nd Unit:

Mary Lou Byrd

Make-up

Kimberly Felix-Burke

2nd Unit:

Fred Blau

Hairstylist

Kathe Swanson

2nd Unit:

Gunnar Swanson

Dianne L. Roberson

Title Design

Pittard Sullivan

Fitzgerald

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Hans Zimmer

Additional Music

Nick Glennie-Smith

John Van Tongeren

Music Supervisor

Tim Sexton

Music Editor

Laura Perlman

Music Scoring Mixer

Jay Rifkin

Songs/Music Extracts

"Hyphopha" by

Ryeland Allison,

performed by Randelle

Stainback; "Senor

Matanza" by Jose

Manuel Chao, Philippe

Teboul, Santiago

Casariago, Thomas

Darnal, Tomas Arroyos-

Valle, performed by

Mano Negra; "Houlou"

by and performed

by Cheb Mami; "Fall

Down" by Todd

Nichols, Glen Phillips,

Toad, performed by

Toad the Wet Sprocket;

"Baby Please Don't Go"

by Joe Williams,

performed by Webb

Wilder; "Follow That

Man" by and performed

by Boz Scaggs; "Slow

Turn" by Gerald Fried;

"The Strangest Party"

by Michael Hutchence,

Andrew Farris,

performed by INXS

Foley Editors

Jeff Payne

Scott G. G. Haller

Sound Mixer

Russell Williams II

ADR Mixer

Thomas J. O'Connell

Foley Mixer

Mary Jo Lang

Re-recording Mixers

Rick Alexander

Michael C. Casper

James Bolt

Supervising Sound

Effects Editor

William L. Manger

Sound Effects Editors

Adam Johnston

Samuel C. Crutcher

Scott A. Tinsley

Bob O'Brien

Foley Artists

John B. Roesch

Hilda Hodges

Stunt Co-ordinator

Shane Dixon

Aerial Stunt Co-ordinator

B. J. Worth

Aerial Stunt Rigger

Jake Brake

Skydiving Supervisor

Guy Manos

Cast

Wesley Snipes

Pete Nessim

Gary Bussey

Ty Moncrief

Yancy Butler

Jessie Crossman

Michael Jeter

Earl Leedy

Corin Nemec

Selkirk

Kyle Secor

Swoop

Luca Bercovici

Jagger

US Marshals Pete Nessim and his

brother Terry are assigned to

escort notorious computer hacker Earl

Leedy to a Federal Prison. Halfway

through their journey on a commercial

747, there is what appears to be a ter-

rorist attack. In the ensuing mayhem,

Terry is killed, the plane door flies

open and several passengers, including

Leedy, go missing, presumed dead.

Back on the ground, the FBI suspects

that the Nessim brothers bungled the

operation. Pete's badge is suspended,

pending investigation. Nobody believes

his theory that the attack on the 747

was orchestrated by skydivers, in order

to kidnap Leedy. Pete resolves to in-

vestigate on his own. His first contact is a

professional skydiver, Jessie Crossman.

He has a hunch that her ex-boyfriend

may have had something to do with

the kidnapping. Sure enough, a little

girl who survived the hijack recognises

his face.

Meanwhile, Ty Moncrief, the leader

of the criminal gang, is forcing Leedy to

learn how to skydive. In one such ses-

sion, he engineers the boyfriend's murder.

He intends to swoop on the Drugs

Malcolm-Jamal Warner

Terry Nessim

Rex Linn

Bobby

Grace Zahriske

Winona

Robert LaSardo

</

Dumb and Dumber

USA 1994

Director: Peter Farrelly

Certificate

12
Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
New Line Cinema
In association with
Motion Picture
Corporation of America
Executive Producers
Gerald T. Olson
Aaron Meyerson

Producers

Charles B. Wessler
Brad Kreyov
Steve Stabler

Co-producers

Bobby Farrelly
Tracie Graham-Rice
Bradley Thomas

Associate Producers

Bradley Jenkel
Chad Oman
Ellen Dumouchel

Production Executive

Leon Dudevior

Production Supervisors

Tracie Graham-Rice
Providence:
David D. Collins

Production Co-ordinator

Wendy Cox

Location Manager

Garrett Grant

Location Co-ordinator

Donna B. Brown

Executive in Charge of Post production

Joe Fineman

Post-production Supervisor

Sara King

2nd Unit Director

Gerald T. Olson

Assistant Directors

Denise G. Denver
Steve Stabler

Casting

Rick Montgomery
Dan Parada
Voice:
Burton Sharp

Screenplay

Peter Farrelly
Bennett Yellin
Bobby Farrelly

Script Supervisors

Martin Kitrosser
2nd Unit:
Suzanne Nebeker

Director of Photography

Mark Irwin

2nd Unit Directors of Photography

Colorado:
Robert D. Tomer
Utah:
Michael Lund

Providence:

Brian Heller
Camera Operators
Dean Lyras
Frank R. Coleman

Digital Opticals

Digital Magic
The Digital Center
at the Post Group

Opticals

Howard Anderson

Editor

Christopher Greenbury
Production Designer
Sidney J.
Bartholomew Jnr

Art Director

Alan Jay Vetter
Set Decorator
Bradford Johnson

Set Dressers

Gary Sivertson
Michael Budge
Kelly Hermsdorf

Scenic Artist

Peter A. Chevako
Storyboard Artists
Jennifer Sauer
Kevin Farrell

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Frank Ceglia

Animatronic Owls

Tod A. Mathias

Costume Design

Mary Zophres

Wardrobe Supervisors

Pamela Withers
Providence:
Marcia Zammarelli

Key Make-up Artist

Sheryl Leigh Ptk

Special Make-up Effects

W.M. Creations
Matthew Mungle

Key Hairstylist

Pauletta O. Lewis
TeleDesign
Pittard Sullivan
Fitzgerald

Music

Todd Rundgren

Music Executive

Toby Emmerich
Music Supervisor
Dawn Soler

Music Editor

Joe E. Rand

Songs/Music Extracts

"Boom Shack-A-Lak"
by Steven Kapur, Ervin
Barrington Woolley,
performed by Apache
Indian; "Hip Hop
Solution", "Rap Me
Silly" by and performed
by Ray Colcord; "Red
Right Hand" by Nick
Cave, Mick Harvey,
Thomas Wylder,
performed by Nick
Cave and The Bad
Seeds; "The Love Affair"
by Dick Walter; "Get
Ready" by William
"Smookey" Robinson,
performed by The
Proclaimers;
"Permanent Vacation",
"How Can You Call
that Beautiful?" by
and performed by Tom
Wolfe; Johansson,
performed by
Echobelly; "2Ft. O' Butt
Crack" by Jimmy Glen
Pines, Elmo Jackson,
performed by Circle
the Wagon; "Too
Much of a Good
Thing" by Bret Reilly,
performed by The Sons;
"The Rain, the Park,
and Other Things" by
Arty Kornfield, Steve
Duboff, performed
by The Cowbills;
"Mockingbird" by
Charles Foxx, Inex
Foxx, performed by
Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels;
"The Ballad of Peter
Pumpkinhead" by
Andy Partridge,
performed by Crash
Test Dummies; "The
Bear Song" by and
performed by Green
Jelly; "Hurdy Gurdy
Man" by Donovan,
performed by The
Butthole Surfers;
"Take" by Lance Tawzer
Stoley, performed by
The Lupins; "Crash" by
P.J. Court, performed
by The Primitives;
"Where I Find My
Heaven" by Brouwer,
Gibbs, Hurley, Hurley,
performed by Gigilo
Aunts; "Trumpet
Voluntary" by Jeremiah
Clarke; "You Sexy
Thing" by Brown,
Wilson, performed by
Dee-lite; "Country
Adagio" by and
performed by Ian

Hughes; "Oh Pretty
Woman" by Roy
Orbison, William Dees,
performed by Roy
Orbison; "Endangered
Species", "Snow Bird
Serenade" by and
performed by Ray
Colcord, Joe E. Rand;
"New Age Girl" by
Galeb Guillotte,
performed by Dead
Eye Dick; "Should
Have Known" by and
performed by Michael
Alan Lerner, Sander
Selover; "If You Don't
Love Me (I'll Kill
Myself)" by and
performed by Pete
Droge; "Ride of Mrs
Gulch" by Harold
Arlen; "Make Love
Now" by Patrick
Wilson; "Can We Still
Be Friends" by and
performed by Todd
Rundgren; "Rollin'
Down the Hill" by Phil
Selen, Danny Wilde,
performed by The
Rembrandts; "Whiney
Whiney (Things That
Make Me Crazy)" by
Willie One Blood,
Henry Mancini, Ray
Davies, performed by
Willie One Blood;
"Hallelujah" (from
"The Messiah") by
Georg Friedrich Handel

Sound Design

Tim Gedemer
Supervising Sound Editor
Craig Clark

Dialogue Editors

Alan Schultz
Joe Kraemer

ADREditor

Robert Guastini

Sound Mixers

Jonathan "Earl" Stein
Music:
Todd Rundgren

ADR Recordist

James B. Hare
Foley Mixer
Eric Thompson

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Tim Philben
William Fresh

Sound Effects Editors

David Farmer
Ann Scibelli
Ricardo Broadus
George Nemzer

Foley Artists

Gregg Barbanell
Vince Nicastro

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rick Barker
Dog Trainers
Lynne Seus
Jed Seus
Clint Youngreen

Cast

Jim Carrey
Lloyd Christmas
Jeff Daniels
Harry Dunne

Lauren Holly
Mary Swanson
Mike Starr
Joe Mentalino

Karen Duffy
J.P. Shay
Charles Rocket
Nicholas Andre
Victoria Rowell

Athletic Beauty
Joe Baker
Barnard
Hank Brandt

Karl Swanson
Teri Garr
Helen Swanson
Brady Bluhm
Billy

Cam Neely
Sea Bass
Felton Perry
Detective Dale

Brad Lockerman
Bobby
Rob Moran
Bartender

Kathryn Frick
Cashier
Zen Gesner
Lawrence Kopp
Dale's Men
Clint Allen
Coroner
Connie Sawyer
Elderly Woman
LinShaye
Mrs Nuegeboren
Mike Watkins
Reporter
Harland Williams
State Trooper
Diane Kimerk
Hilary Matthews
Waitresses
Lisa Stothard
Bus Stop Beauty
Sean Gildea
Sea Bass Friend
Charles Chun
Flight Attendant
Helen Boll
Swanson Maid
Fred Stoller
Anxious Man at Phone
Karen Ingram
Nicholas' Girl
Jesse Borja
Martial Artist
Venne' L. Arcoraci
Anna Aberg
Samantha Carpel
Elaine Wood
Bikini Girls
Bruce Downs
Barber
Denise Vienne
Concierge
Nancy Farrelly
Diner Gawker
Catalina Izasa
Manicurist
Samatha Pearson
Masseuse
Ken Duval
Mutt Cuts Boss
Cecile Kreyov
Airport Bystander
George Bedard
Peering Man
Bill Beauchene
Peering Man's Friend
Gary Sivertson
Aspen Police Officer
John Stroehman
Terry Mullany
Brad Blank
Mark Miosky
Mike Cavallo
Tom Leasca
Kevin Sheehan
Kenny Griswald
Brian Mone
Brad Norton
John Dale
Mike Burke
Kevin Constantine
Chris Spain
Paul Pelletier
Mark Levine
Bill Smith
Mark Charpentier
James Ahern
Jim Blake
Preservation Partiers
TraciAdell
Sexy Woman
Anita Rice
Pam Nielson
Nancy Barker
Brad Louder
Doug Caputo
James Horrocks
Rolf Brekke
Sweater Friends
Clem Franek
Wallbanger

9,604 feet
107 minutes

Dolbystereo
In colour
Prints by
Film House

Rhode Island limousine driver Lloyd Christmas picks up Mary Swanson, an attractive fare. Taking her to the airport to catch a flight to Aspen, Colorado, Lloyd tells her the story of his hopeless life. Noticing that she has left her briefcase in the lobby, he rushes to retrieve it. Meanwhile his limo is towed away, for which he is sacked. On the same day, Lloyd's roommate Harry Dunne, a dog groomer with a "Mutt Cutts" van resembling a giant dog, also loses his job. Lloyd enlists Harry to drive him to Aspen with the briefcase in the hope of following up his romantic interest in Mary. Unknown to either of them, the briefcase is stuffed with dollar-bills, a ransom for Mary's husband who has been kidnapped by Nicholas André, a family friend of Mary's wealthy parents. André's thugs, Joe Mental and J. P. Shay, are now in pursuit.

On the road, Lloyd and Harry encounter numerous misadventures, including run-ins with a vicious gay trucker and a Pennsylvania State Trooper. Joe Mental is finally and accidentally despatched after a red hot chilli pepper-eating contest. Arriving in Aspen, they fight over the briefcase, knocking it open to reveal the money. On a spree they rent a Presidential suite, buy tasteless new clothes and a Lamborghini Diabolo, dutifully replacing each dollar bill they remove with an IOU note.

They meet up with Mary at an Aspen Preservation Society benefit gala for the Icelandic Snow Owl, hosted by her parents with André. Romantic confusion ensues, in which Harry, rather than Lloyd, takes up with Mary. A jealous Lloyd spikes Harry's drink with laxative to ruin his planned evening with Mary and arrives to tell her that the briefcase is in his hotel room. They go back to the room together, only to be captured by André. Kitted out with a bullet-proof vest, Harry arrives in the nick of time. He and the FBI save the day. Mary and her husband are reunited. Lloyd and Harry hit the road.

Dweeb, dork, geek, nerd: American slang luxuriates in the vocabulary of stupidity, and judging from its recent output, so does the American cinema. *Dumb and Dumber* arrives wearing its no-brow credentials on its sleeve

and inherits from a rich, if hardly reputable, vein of dumb that stretches in various generic directions, including the *National Lampoon* series and the *Porky's* movies. *Dumb and Dumber* inherits much from these motherlodes of low comedy, in particular a taste for fraternity-house scatology, showcased in re-runs of the old piss-for-beer switch gag and the laxative micky finn routine - the latter played out with bowel-contorting exaggeration by Jeff Daniels.

However it is Jim Carrey who is on show here, albeit with less panache than in either of his two previous roles. In *Ace Ventura* there was a brash and breezy novelty to his manic mugging, while *The Mask* took Carrey's contortions to extreme yet logical limits through computerised prostheses. Here, with his toothy gurning and piebowl haircut, Carrey seems stuck in Jerry Lewis mode. There is a slightly other-than-human quality to his facility for shape-changing and conceptual free-forming. More in evidence than before, however, is the malevolence lining Carrey's comedic persona (to be fully exploited, one hopes, in his role as the Riddler in the forthcoming *Batman Forever*).

Dumb and Dumber may not be a step forward for Carrey, but it does provide more evidence that the Dumb Club is growing; Wayne and Garth, Beavis and Buttthead, Bill and Ted and Forrest Gump are now joined by Lloyd and Harry. The film's poster has them sitting, à la *Forrest Gump*, on a bench, staring vacantly, expectantly, utterly gormlessly at something off-frame. Thus it promises a parodic take on the culture of dumb which it fails to deliver. The film ends up collaborating with the wider culture that will face up to its internal horror and anomie only through dazed and confused slacker-chic or a pernicious glorification of freedom-through-lobotomy.

On the road and at large in the playground of the rich and famous that is Aspen, *Dumb and Dumber* revels in a comedy of confusion. For me, the laughs were few, yet at the packed preview screening, it was evident that Carrey has his own audience that laughs as much in sympathy with his character's misfortunes as with the performer himself.

Chris Darke



Stupid cupids: Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels

Far from Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog

USA 1994

Director: Phillip Borsos

Certificate

U

Distributor

20th Century Fox
Production Company
20th Century Fox

Producer

Peter O'Brian
Production Co-ordinator
Carol Schafer

Unit Production Manager

Lisa Towers

Unit Manager/

Location Manager

Wendy Williams

Post-production Supervisor

David Dewar

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Debbie van Dusen

Assistant Directors

Lee Knipfelberg

Colleen Mitchell

Kevin Parks

Rachel Leiterman

Jerald Schoenroth

Casting

Linda Phillips Palo

Vancouver

Lynne Carrow

Screenplay

Phillip Borsos

Script Supervisors

Christine Lalonde

2nd Unit:

Glynda Fitzgerald

Director of Photography

James Gardner

Additional Photography

Tobias Schliessler

Peter Woeste

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Richard Leiterman

Camera Operators

William Waring

Richard Mason

2nd Unit:

Richard Leiterman

Joel Ransom

Bob Ennis

Storm Sequence Visual

Compositing/Digital Effects

Dan Kreh Productions

Visual Effects Supervisors

Dan Kreh

Production:

Ted Rogers

Digital Effects

Editors:

Terry Dale

Brian Howard

Michael Morey

Animators:

Virginia Chan

Harvey Fong

Livio Passera

Breakdown Artists

Linda Leduc

Julie O'Rourke

Joan Lovett

Ann Russell

Editor

Sidney Wolinsky

Production Designer

Mark S. Freeborn

Art Director

Yvonne J. Hurst

Set Decorators

Peter Louis Lando

Marianne Kaplan

Set Dressers

Jim Campbell

Scott Calderwood

Storyboard Artist

Oliver Thomas

Special Effects Co-ordinator

John Thomas

Special Effects Supervi

Dean Lockwood

Animatronic Design

Woody Lawhon

Costume Design

Antonia Bardon

Superhero Costumes:

Susanne Falk Borsos

Costume Supervisor

Terry Haws

Key Make-up Artist

Stan Edmonds

Key Hairstylist

Pauline Tremblay

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music/Music Conductor

John Scott

Music Editor

Richard Bernstein

Sound Design/Supervisor

Bruce Nyznik

Dialogue Editors

Eric Hill

Frank Faigno

ADR Editor

Debra Rurak

Foley Editor

Mark Benoit

Sound Mixer

Michael McGee

ADR Recordist

Kelly "Crash" Cole

Foley Recordists

Chris James

Bill Mellow

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Paul Sharpe

Dean Giammarco

Bill "Otis" Sheppard

Sound Effects Editors

Marc Chasson

Anke Bakker

Irving Mulch

Sheena Macrae

Foley Artists

Shane Shemko

Cam Wagner

Technical Adviser

Denis Lajeunesse

Stunt Co-ordinator

Betty Thomas

Animals

Creative Animal Talent

Animal Trainers

Head:

Dawn Martin

Dakotah:

Frank Disso

Animal Voicing

Frank Welker

Cast

Mimi Rogers

Katherine McCormick

Bruce Davison

John McCormick

Jesse Bradford

Angus McCormick

Tom Bower

John Gale

Joel Palmer

Silas McCormick

Dakotah

Yellow Dog

Josh Wannamaker

David Finlay

Margot Finley

Sara

Matt Bennett

Ron Willick

St Clair McCall

Himself

Jennifer Weissenborn

Labrador Helicopter Pilot

Gordon Neave

Flight Engineer

Karen Kruper

Nurse

Dean Lockwood

John LeClair

Brent Stait

Sartechs

7.256feet

81 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

14-year-old Angus McCormick lives with his parents, John and Katherine, and his younger brother, Silas, in a remote region of British Columbia. John, Angus and the boy's constant companion, a labrador called Yellow Dog, take out their boat, *Cor-morant*. A sudden storm blows up, and the boat capsizes. John is rescued by a coast guard service headed by John Gale, but Angus and his dog are washed ashore on a remote coastline. They survive for a few days by eating fish, but on the ninth day, they decide to strike for home, walking through uncharted forest. Angus and Yellow Dog encounter wolves and other wild animals. With the dog leading the way, they survive by eating small animals, and eventually beetles and grubs.

On day 15, his father, Gale and the search party find Angus' campsite. Two days later, with no further clues, Gale suggests that the search be ended. Meanwhile, a weakened Angus spies a logging route on the opposite side of a high ravine, traversable only by a perilous log bridge. Midway across the ravine, a helicopter sees Angus. The boy is rescued, but Yellow Dog falls 200 feet into the water, and is presumed dead. Angus and his family are reunited, but the boy is stricken with anxiety about Yellow Dog's fate.

He makes forays into the forest to blow his dog whistle in the hope that Yellow Dog might hear it. Sara, Angus' schoolfriend, tells him he is a hero amongst his classmates and gives him a chaste kiss, but Angus retorts that Yellow Dog is the real hero. Three weeks pass and Angus sadly blows his whistle once more. A distant bark responds and Yellow Dog walks slowly into view. Angus and Yellow Dog's eyes meet. Followed by Silas, Angus races towards his dog as John and Katherine look on in tearful joy.

Taking the homeward bound theme from *The Incredible Journey* and combining it with a wilderness redolent of such environmentally-friendly films as *Once Upon a Forest*, *Far From Home* is an uncomplicated movie that celebrates family values and animal loyalty. Even the wilderness – so often used as a metaphor for wild and appetitive states that are contradictory to civilisation – is just what it is, nothing more. The terrain is certainly inhospitable, as the film's dazzling cinematography amply illustrates, but it is not a place that threatens psychic dissolution as it does in, say, *Deliverance*. This film suggests that real shelter comes from the warmth (literal and metaphorical) of the family hearth. With family and dog on his side, Angus may be lost, cartographically speaking, but neither his nor Yellow Dog's homing instincts are damaged.

Also intact – and here is where suspension of disbelief is necessary – is Jesse Bradford as Angus. After nearly 20 days in the wild, fuelled by a diet of roast mice, Angus is the same chubby-faced boy as he was at the film's beginning. Presumably, child labour laws prohibit directors from starving adoles-



Pedigree chums: Dakotah, Jesse Bradford

cent actors in the interests of verisimilitude, so Jesse Bradford's pleasing plumpness will disappoint any vicarious dieters amongst *Far From Home's* audience.

As an adventure story, *Far from Home* is paced entirely by its own events and shaped by the monumental environment in which it was filmed, with surging music for the emotive bits. The storm at sea, during which the *Cor-morant* pitches and sways, makes for truly nauseating viewing, while the footage of remote British Columbia is breathtaking. With Mother Nature moving in on the film's starring role, the supporting performances look weak in comparison. The McCormick parents (Mimi Rogers and Bruce Davison) use two facial expressions only: grim determination, and grit-those-teeth and wipe-those-eyes happiness.

There are no attempts whatsoever at characterisation. No doubt Jesse Bradford constantly got his feet wet and his nails dirty slithering around in the forest, but the only acting beyond the call of duty required of him was to eat a live maggot. (Or did he? Admirably, *Far From Home* is a green movie, director Phillip Borsos' team was kind to critters, using prosthetic animals in the appropriate places.) The animal sequences, featuring wolves, a lynx, and canine performer Dakotah as the eponymous Yellow Dog are well organised, and carefully edited, showing them to maximum effect.

It is tempting to view Phillip Borsos' film as a subtle contribution to the general debate about how family values, sex and violence are portrayed by major feature films and perhaps it is: the kiss that Angus receives after his ordeal is assertively chaste. However, *Far From Home* is also an appealing adventure story in the time-honoured boy-and-his-dog tradition. The limitations of a pre-made mould are the limitations of this film.

Louise Gray

Fiorile

Italy/France/Germany 1993

Directors: Paolo and Vittorio Taviani

Certificate

12

Distributor

Arrow Film

Production Company

Filmre-Gierre Film

In association with

Pentafilm

Florida Movies

La Sept/Cinema

Canal +

Roxy Film

K.S. Film

Executive Producers

Jean Claude Cecile

Luggi Waldleitner

Karl Spiehs

Producer

Grazia Volpi

Associate Producers

Anna Rita Appolloni

Claudio Anram

Production Manager

Luciano Calzola

Unit Managers

Antonio Stefanucci

Norberto de Pit

Assistant Directors

Mimmola Girosi

Screenplay

Sandro Petraglia

Paolo Taviani

Vittorio Taviani

Story

Paolo Taviani

Vittorio Taviani

Director of Photography

Giuseppe Lanci

Camera Operator

Franco Bruni

Steadicam Operator

Adriano Cardinale

Editor

Roberto Perpignani

Art Director

Gianni Sbarra

Set Dresser

Luca Gobbi

Scenic Artist

Giancarlo Gabrielli

Special Effects

Ditta Battistelli

Costume Design

Lina Nerli Taviani

Make-up Artist

Mario Michisanti

Hairstylist

Mauro Tamagnini

Music

Nicola Piovani

Music performed by

Orchestra dell' Unione

Musici di Roma

Violin Soloist:

Francesca Taviani

Music Conductor

Nicola Piovani

Sound Editor

Alessandra Perpignani

Sound Recordist

Bruno Puppato

Sound Mixer

Danilo Moroni

Sound Effects

Alvaro Gramigna

Fernando Caso

Cast

◀ officer, Jean. A young peasant girl, Elisabetta, comes across Jean in the woods and they fall in love; he names her "Fiorile" from the revolutionary name for the month of May in which they met. But while the couple are distracted, Elisabetta's brother, Corrado, steals the coffer. Jean's punishment for losing it is death by firing squad; Corrado never comes forward to rescue him. Elisabetta discovers her brother's role in Jean's execution and swears revenge, but she dies while giving birth to Jean's child.

100 years later one of Elisabetta's descendants completes the task for her. The Benedetti family now owns a sumptuous Medicean villa – its members have become lords of the area. The ambitious Alessandro wants to go into politics; his brother, Renzo is simple; his sister Elisa bears an extraordinary resemblance to her ancestor Elisabetta. She falls in love with a local boy, Elio, but the brothers secretly conspire to send him abroad because his background is too humble. When Elisa finds out, she poisons her two brothers, remembering Elisabetta's vow.

Another couple of generations pass, and young Massimo has been trying to shake off the curse of the "Maledettis". He identifies with the heroic Jean, and he joins his lover Chiara in the resistance against the Nazis. But they are captured; Massimo is spared because of his family connections, Chiara gives birth to a son as she dies. Massimo – the present day children's grandfather – becomes convinced that anyone near him will be cursed, and goes off to live the life of a hermit. That is why he sent his son to France, and why he does not receive the family well when they arrive.

That night, the two children explore their grandfather's house, and find a dummy of Jean in the attic. They climb inside it as a game, but Massimo interrupts them, and believes Jean has come alive. He speaks to the dummy, confiding all his fears and disappointments. But then he finds out what has happened. The family is forced to leave. In the car on their return, the boy is fingering a gold coin he found in the attic, while the girl sadly draws the name 'Fiorile' on one of the windows.

After the metaphysical intensity of their last work, *Night Sun*, the Taviani brothers return to familiar themes in *Fiorile*: we are once more in the moral universe of the fable, in which curses and spells resonate over centuries, romantic love is denied by bitter blood feuds and the rolling Tuscan countryside provides the backdrop for murder and passion. The story of the Benedetti/Maledetti family as it unravels over a 200-year span also makes some telling socio-political points about Italian history; the touchingly innocent love stories of three generations are all ultimately destroyed by the political ruthlessness which remains constant over the whole period in question. The Taviani offer little consolation; indeed the film's closing scenes imply a kind of eternal



On your head be it: 'Fiorile'

recurrence which gives this very moral tale an added dimension of grimness.

The directors are by now very experienced at telling this kind of story. Their immaculate control of pitch and pacing is meticulous, almost too much so: there is little humour to help us on our way. From the starchy, whimsical mood of the first episode, the tone darkens appreciably as we enter the modern era. The countryside around Florence, from its initial pastoral lushness, gradually becomes more and more alienating; it is transformed from the welcoming refuge for Jean and Elisabetta's passionate tryst to the site of Elisa's callous mushroom-poisoning of her brothers. Nature, as in the Taviani's previous work, is never the blissful retreat of retired Chiantishire addicts; as the wind howls on the soundtrack, we are made to feel the harshness of an outside world which is capable of delivering so many unwelcome surprises.

The old man's eventual retreat from this world, prompted by the fear that the family curse will inexorably devour anyone with whom he comes into contact, is a bleak conclusion to the previous generations' tragedies; but the Taviani provide an extra twist of the knife with the reactions of the two children as they listen to their grandfather's moving address to the resuscitated Jean.

As the girl breaks down in tears, the boy finds it hard to stifle his giggles; the cycle of good and evil, in other words, does not end here. We come to realise that the delicate balance between love and money, nobility and greed is not something which can be resolved by any individual's actions, but is instead a never-ending dialectic which will ever afflict the human condition. This, suggest the directors, is the real curse of the Benedettis.

What is missing from *Fiorile* is a really memorable visual scene, such as the church massacre from *La Notte di San Lorenzo*; it is as if the Taviani brothers are stripping down any virtuoso excesses from their work in the fear that they might be distracted from delivering their powerful, and increasingly sombre message.

Peter Aspdon

Hoop Dreams

USA 1994

Dir: Steve James

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Company

FineLine Features

Kartemquin Films

KTCATV

Executive Producers

Gordon Quinn

Catherine Allan

Producers

Fred Marx

Steve James

Peter Gilbert

Executive in Charge of Production for KTCATV

Gerry Richman

KTCATV Production Manager

Emily Stevens

Post-production Supervisor

Susanne Suffredin

Post-production Coordinator

Fennell Doremus

Screenplay

Steve James

Fred Marx

Peter Gilbert

Director of Photography

Peter Gilbert

Additional Photography

Gordon Quinn

Ed Scott

Sid Lubitsch

Kevin McCarey

Mirko Popadic

Jim Morrisette

Jim Fetterley

Editors

Fred Marx

Steve James

Bill Hauge

Creative Consultant

Gordon Quinn

Title Design

George Eastman

Betsy Fil

Additional Music

Tom Yore

Music Producer

Ben Sidran

Songs/Music Extracts

"Hoop Dreams", "Fast Break" by Ben Sidran,

Ricky Peterson, Tony

Mosely, performed by

Tony M; "Under The

Knife" by Ben Sidran,

Ricky Peterson,

performed by Billy

Sheila; "Traveling

Music" by Ben Sidran,

Ricky Peterson,

performed by Bob

Malach; "Low Post",

"Face" by Ben Sidran,

performed by Bob

Malach, Ben Sidran;

"Junior Moved" by Ben

Sidran, Jerry Alexander,

performed by Jerry

Alexander; "Walking

the Walk" Ricky

Peterson, Ben Sidran,

Paul Peterson,

performed by Ricky

Peterson; "The Original

Lesson" by Ben Sidran,

Ricky Peterson, Greg

Jacobs, performed by

Enoch G., Kempty

Kemp; "In This

Very Room" by Lea

Carol Massie; "Dream

Theme" by and

performed by

Tess Tere; "Happy

Birthday To You" by

Patty S. Hill, Mildred H.

Hill; "Rock and Roll

(part II)" by Gary Glitter,

Mike Leander,

performed by Gary

Glitter; "Washington

& Lee Swing" by

Thornton W. Allen,

C. A. Robbins, M. W.

Sheak; "The Bus Stop-

Electric Slide" by and

performed by Charles

Green; "Turn off the

Radio" by Eric Bodies,

Ice Cube, performed

by Ice Cube

Sound

Adam Singer

Tom Yore

Additional Sound

Ed Scott

Mirko Popadic

Bill Jenkins

Technical Consultant

Jim Morrisette

Research

Laura Hoffman

Bill Siegel

Cast

William Gates

Arthur Agee

Emma Gates

Curtis Gates

Sheila Agee

Arthur 'Bo' Agee

Earl Smith

Gene Pingatore

Dennis Doyle

Isiah Thomas

Sister Marilyn Hopewell

Bill Gleason

Patricia Weir

Marjorie Heard

Aretha Mitchell

Luther Bedford

Shannon Johnson

Tomika Agee

Joe Sweetie Agee

Jazz Agee

Catherine Mines

Alicia Mines

Alvin Bibbs

Elijah Ephraim

Willie Gates

Spike Lee

James Kelly

Michael O'Brien

Dick Vitale

Kevin O'Neill

Bo Ellis

Bobby Knight

Joey Meyer

Frank DuBois

Bob Gibbons

Clarence Webb

Stan Wilson

Derrick Zinneman

Tim Gray

Myron Gordon

Themselves

Steve James

Narrator

tbfeet

tbcminutes

In colour

● This documentary follows four years in the lives of two black teenage boys from the Chicago housing projects. William Gates and Arthur Agee, just graduated from junior high, dream of becoming basketball players. Spotted by talent scouts, the boys are offered semi-scholarship places at the prestigious St Joseph's College out in

the largely white suburbs. Arthur fails to fulfil his potential, cannot make the academic grades and falls behind with fee payments. He is asked to leave, and joins Marshall, the local public high school. William, who receives funding from the director of Encyclopaedia Britannica as well as his school scholarship, stays on at St Joseph's battling with the academic work and shining at basketball. What looks like a potentially brilliant career becomes more erratic, however, when he injures his knee badly and has to undergo two operations. Meanwhile William has had a baby, Alicia, with his girlfriend, Catherine.

Arthur's father leaves his family. When he returns a year later, a reformed man and an ardent church-goer, it transpires that he was beating his wife, addicted to crack, and had been imprisoned for burglary. While Arthur's academic record remains poor, his basketball goes from strength to strength. Eventually his unfancied school team comes third in the state championships.

By William's final year, his school team does worse than it ever has, but he is offered a scholarship to Marquette University in Wisconsin, providing he passes his final SAT exams. After five tries, he passes and graduates from St Joseph's. Arthur repeatedly fails his SAT and has to settle for a basketball scholarship to a junior college. He finally passes his summer school exams and gets to college. The film ends explaining William's disenchantment with Marquette and basketball. He tries to leave but is persuaded to stay on and is faring averagely. Arthur has gone on from his college to Arkansas University. He now has two children and is still hoping to become a professional basketball player.

● A three-hour film about basketball may seem like a long haul, and there are ways in which this could have been made tighter and shorter. In the end, it turns out to be a largely fascinating document of the real lives of its two teenage protagonists.

What William and Arthur share overwhelmingly is a love of the game and the perception that it could lead them out of the Chicago ghetto. But as the film shows, just being good is not enough. To become professional players the boys have to get to college, and to do that, they have to pass academic exams. Of the seven black boys at Mineral Area, the junior college to which Arthur finally goes, six are basketball scholars.

When Spike Lee makes an appearance at William's summer school for basketball hopefuls, he states the only consciously political point in the film: that this is all about money. College talent scouts come in order to entice players they hope will make money for the school and these black boys serve their purpose. Later, the scouts somewhat bashfully agree with him.

Hoop Dreams shows how the system uses Arthur and his family. Swept up by the prestige of going to St Joseph's,

a private school with a reputation for creating basketball players, they get caught in a financial trap. After Arthur leaves, his family is forced to find a way of paying off the \$18,000 they owe or Arthur will lose the academic credits he received. As it happens, Arthur ends up doing as well through the rowdy but surprisingly helpful and supportive school system as William does with private education.

Understated as they are, there are some extraordinary family sagas here. Without making any judgment, the cameras watch Arthur's father develop and then kick his crack dependency, all the time claiming that he is trying to do his best for his son. Despite the physical and emotional damage done to her, we see Arthur's mother striving to keep the family together, providing for them on a pittance and determined that her son will get to college. On Arthur's 18th birthday, without a trace of irony or melodrama she says that she feels lucky he has reached that age: a lot of sons do not. There are plenty of issues here about class and race, but the film is careful to let them emerge through the voices and daily concerns of the protagonists.

Other problems are revealed in the same way. William's brother, Curtis, was once the great basketball hope of his year, but he could not conform to the system, failed college and dropped out. Now he invests his own dreams in his brother. The philosophical, rather gentle William is all too aware of and troubled by this. In a feature film, this would be the the big issue. Here it simmers below the surface of barely stated conflicts with which he seems unable to come to terms. His efforts to seek help in a man's world are in vain: his father is not around, his brother is too caught up in basketball daydreams and his bear-like coach is almost brutally unhelpful. Arthur seems more shiftless, less willing to think about things. Asked if he thinks he might end up going through the same troubles as his father he replies no, then "well, maybe, who knows?" Sassier than William, he also seems weaker, matures less over the four years, and certainly appears more dependent on the basketball ticket dream.

Documentaries can never really be objective because they are, by definition, intrusive. Yet this one does appear to have a disarming honesty about it. It rarely seems self-conscious, obligingly presents contradictory viewpoints of people and issues, and, despite frequent tears and declarations of love, is never sentimental. It might be argued that there is too much basketball to allow the really important games to work dramatically, but these endless matches are, after all, the stuff of the boys' lives. And although *Hoop Dreams* is hardly innovative in combining to-camera interviews with fly-on-the-wall scenarios, there is something about the film's upfront rawness that pitches it engagingly somewhere between home movie and drama.

Amanda Lipman

Little Big League

USA 1994

Director: Andrew Scheinman

Certificate

PG
Distributor
 Rank
Production Company
 Castle Rock
 Entertainment presents
 A Lobell/Bergman
 production
Executive Producers
 Steve Nicolaides
 Andrew Bergman
Producers
 Mike Lobell
 2nd Unit:
 Barry Zelickson
Associate Producer
 Adam Merims
Production Co-ordinator
 Ellen Hillers
Unit Production Manager
 Donna E. Bloom
Location Managers
 Robert Medcraft
 Chicago:
 Mark Mamalakis
2nd Unit Director
 Bill Pohlrad
Assistant Directors
 Mark McGann
 Philip A. Patterson
Casting
 Mary Gail Artz
 Barbara Cohen
 Associates:
 Susan Weider
 Amy Sabel
 Minneapolis:
 Lynn Blumenthal
Casting
 ADR Voice:
 Mickie McGowan
Screenplay
 Gregory K. Pincus
 Adam Scheinman
Story
 Gregory K. Pincus
Script Supervisor
 Karen Golden
Director of Photography
 Donald E. Thorin
2nd Unit Directors of Photography
 Peter Deming
 John Stephens
Aerial Photography
 Bill Hedenberg
Camera Operators
 Frederic Smith
 Daniel Gold
Visual Effects
 Dreamquest Images
 Executive Producer:
 Mark Galvin
 Co-ordinator:
 Walter Hart
 Producer:
 Robert Staad
Digital Imagery
 Howard Burdick
Matte Artist
 Karen DeJong
Editor
 Michael Jablow
Production Designer
 Jeffrey Howard
Set Decorators
 Ethel Robins Richards
Set Dressers
 Richie Cline
 Robert F. Shaw III
 Joel Benton
Storyboard Artist
 Chris Buchinsky
Special Effects Co-ordinator
 Danny Gill
Costume Design
 Erica Edell Phillips
Costume Supervisor
 Any Stofsky
Key Make-up Artist
 Pamela Westmore
Key Hairstylist
 Cheri Ruff
Titles/Opticals
 Pacific Tide
Music
 Stanley Clarke

Additional:

Steve Cropper
 Booker T. Jones
 Jeff Beck
 Stanley Clarke
Music Conductor
 William Kidd
Orchestrations
 William Kidd
Music Producer
 Stanley Clarke
Music Supervisors
 Peter Afterman
 Associate:
 Elizabeth Wendel
Music Editor
 Lise Richardson
Songs
 "Walk Don't Run"
 by Johnny Smith,
 performed by Jeff Beck;
 "Philly Dog" by Rufus
 Thomas, performed by
 Booker T & the MG's;
 "Wipeout" by The
 Surfaris; "Willie and
 the Hand Jive" by
 Johnny Otis, performed
 by Jeff Beck, Stanley
 Clarke, Rayford G.
 Griffin; "Stuff You
 Gotta Watch" by
 Muddy Waters,
 performed by The
 Band; "Centerfield"
 by and performed
 by John Fogerty;
 "Runaround Sue" by
 Dion DiMucci, Ernest
 Maresca, performed
 by Dion; "I'm Ready"
 by Antoine Domino,
 Sylvester Bradford,
 Al Lewis, performed
 by Taj Mahal
Supervising Sound Editor
 George Simpson
Sound Editors
 Michael J. Benavente
 Dialogue:
 Rick Freeman
ADR Supervisor
 Julia Evershade
Foley Editor
 John Carr
Production Sound Mixer
 Bob Eber
Music Recordist
 Dan Wallin
ADR Mixers
 Doc Kane
 Charleen Richards
Foley Mixer
 Marilyn Graf
ADR Recordists
 Mike Boudry
 Greg Steele
Foley Recordist
 Don Grafton
Sound Re-recording Mixers
 Rick Alexander
 Jim Bolt
 Andy D'Addario
Foley Artists
 Robin Harlan
 Sarah Jacobs
Technical Adviser
 Ed Farmer
Baseball Co-ordinator
 Steve Levine
Cast
 Luke Edwards
 Billy Heywood
 Timothy Busfield
 Lou Collins
 John Ashton
 Mac Macnally
 Ashley Crow
 Jenny Heywood
 Kevin Dunn
 Arthur Goslin
 Billy L. Sullivan
 Chuck Robert
 Miles Feulner
 Joey Smith

Jonathan Silverman
 Jim Bowers
 Dennis Farina
 George O'Farrell
 Jason Roberts
 Thomas Heywood
 Wolfgang Bodison
 Spencer Hamilton
 Duane Davis
 Jerry Johnson
 Leon "Bull" Burham
 Leon Alexander
 Kevin Elster
 Pat Corning
 Joseph Latimore
 Lonnie Ritter
 Bradley Jay Lesley
 John "Blackout"
 Gatling
 John Minch
 Mark Hodges
 Michael Papa John
 Tucker Kain
 Scott Patterson
 Mike McGrevey
 Troy Staroni
 Larry Hilbert
 Antonio Lewis Todd
 Mickey Scales
 David Arnett
 Little League Manager
 Jeff Garlin
 Opposing Little
 League Manager
 Allan Wasserman
 Little League Umpire
 Teddy Bergman
 Lowell
 Cammy Kerrison
 Shelly Hogeboom
 Allen Hamilton
 Mr Patterson
 Lavin Erickson
 Margaret Sullivan
 John Beasley
 Roberts
 Joe Johnson
 Whitey
 John Gordon
 Wally Holland
 Jason Wolf
 Wally's Stat Guy
 O'Neil Compton
 Major League Umpire
 Steve Cochran
 Tim Russell
 Reporters
 Mark McGann
 Agent
 Peter Syvertsen
 Hotel Manager

Jodie Fisher
 Jodi Russell
 Kristen Fontaine
 Night Nurses
 Gary Groomes
 Doctor
 Charlie Owens
 Patient
 Tony Denman
 Phil
 Vinnie Kartheiser
 James
 Brock Pierce
 Sidney
 Ken Griffey Jnr
 Mickey Tettleton
 Sandy Alomar Jnr
 Carlos Baerga
 Randy Johnson
 Dave Magadan
 Paul O'Neill
 Dean Palmer
 Lou Piniella
 Ivan Rodriguez
 Eric Anthony
 Alex Fernandez
 Wally Joyner
 Lenny Webster
 Rafael Palmeiro
 Tim Lincecum
 Chris Berman
 Themselves
 Kevin Burns
 Jessie Elies
 Scott Meadows
 Richard Petterson
 James Roth
 Edward Stryker
 Patrick Wright
 Steve Eiswirth
 Mike Knight
 Kent Paulson
 Patrick Pohl
 Daniel Smith
 Jay Wange
 Twins Team
 Robert Schiel
 Dean Wittenberg
 Trainers
 Ronald J. Wojcik
 Doctor
 Ryan Anderson
 Marc Gittleman
 Clint Parnell
 Eric Jeffrey
 Batboys
 10,754 feet
 119 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Anamorphic

12-year-old Billy Heywood, a keen baseball fan but mediocre player, regularly attends matches with his grandfather, the wealthy owner of local major league outfit the Minnesota Twins. On the day that they are due to travel to an away game, Billy arrives home to some shock news: the old man has died, and in a video adjunct to his will he announces that he's left the Twins team to his grandson. Almost immediately Billy is pitched into a crisis when he's forced to dismiss team manager George O'Farrell over the latter's unwillingness to countenance a deal with a potential new player. Billy faces a press conference with the revelation that - school vacation permitting - he's about to take over as the game's first owner-manager in decades.

With the players initially resentful of Billy's inexperience and coaching assistant Mac Macnally doubting his management skills, the team loses its first four games, but after his inspirational speech extolling them to rediscover a childlike fun in their playing, the revitalised Twins go on to record six wins in a row. At the same time, the pressure starts to mount: Billy neglects his schoolchums; he has to fire worn-out veteran hitter Jerry Johnson; and

then his mother (who has been dating first baseman Lou Collins) grounds him for using bad language in front of an umpire. Only after enjoying a simple game with some street kids is his faith in baseball reaffirmed.

Billy faces the closing stages of the season with new resolve. Four wins on the trot sets them up for a playoff decider against the Seattle Mariners, where an ingenious setpiece move brings victory tantalisingly within their grasp. His mid-match marriage proposal already accepted by Billy's mom, Collins hits what looks like the clinching home run, but a brilliant catch on the boundary brings the Twins defeat by the slimmest margin. Against the players' wishes, Billy relinquishes his managership, but not before he's called back onto the diamond by the crowd and thrust a triumphant fist in the air.

Having produced, among others, such smart but solidly improving fare as *Stand By Me* and *The Princess Bride*, Castle Rock Entertainment makes his directorial debut with this less nimble but similarly well-intentioned baseball picture, patterned specifically to appeal to a narrow band of pubescent male sports fanatics. Scheinman offers them a carefully-assembled blend of adolescent wish-fulfilment (fantasy baseball made flesh), with plentiful action interspersing a raft of real-life Major League stars, and an all-important respect and delight for the statistical heritage of the modern game. As a sports movie, *Little Big League* is more interested in remaining a credible entertainment for its core market than it is in the knock-about crossover potential of *The Mighty Ducks* films, *Cool Runnings* or the recent Daniel Stern-directed effort *Rookie of the Year*. For instance, the Minnesota Twins' last-gasp defeat goes against the grain of the post-Rocky crowd-pleaser to underline, sentimentally if perhaps unfashionably, that it's the taking part, not the winning that's the most important aspect of sporting competition. But you really do need some knowledge of the intricate workings of the game to be able to get the most out of the film.

There's little else that rises much above the workmanlike. Scheinman's inexperience in longer term structural manipulation results in a rather one-paced affair, broken up by a series of serio-comic baseball montages cut to easy-to-follow R 'n' B standards. The eminently predictable contours of the plotting (kid teaches players childlike innocence, kid in turn learns adult responsibility, divorced mom hooks up with the first baseman) and the rather underpowered casting (ex-thirtysomething regular Busfield signals his graduation to romantic lead by shaving off his ginger beard) wouldn't be out of place in a television movie, though the location shooting in the Minnesota stadium and the highly convincing big match atmosphere indicate considerable big screen production expertise.

Trevor Johnston

The Little Rascals

USA 1994

Director: Penelope Spheeris

Certificate

U

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Amblin Entertainment

Executive Producers

Gerald R. Molen
Deborah Jelin Newmyer
Roger King

Producers

Michael King
Bill Oakes

Co-Producer

Mark Allan

Production Co-ordinator

Kathleen Herbert Keller

Unit Production Manager

Mark Allan

Location Managers

Kristan Wagner
Craig Pointes

Post-production Supervisor

Martin Cohen

Post-production Associate

Erica Frauman

2nd Unit Director

Matt Earl Beesley

Assistant Directors

Matt Earl Beesley

Ronnie Chong

George Bamber

Casting

Judy Taylor

Lynda Gordon

Associate:

Amy Klein

Screenplay

Paul Guay

Stephen Mazur

Penelope Spheeris

Story

Penelope Spheeris

Robert Wolterstorff

Mike Scott

Paul Guay

Stephen Mazur

Script Supervisor

Julie Pitkanen

Director of Photography

Richard Bowen

Camera Operators

Ian Fox

Dustin Blauvelt

Rob Hahn

David Hennings

John Allen

Steadicam Operators

Chris Haarhoff

Elizabeth Ziegler

Digital Compositing

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Steve Rundell

Visual Effects Editors:

Carol Brzezinski

Karey Maltzahn

CIS Hollywood

Producer:

C. Marie Davis

Composers:

Don Lee

Steve Bowen

Cinema Research

Corporation

Digital Effects

Compositing:

Mitch Drain

Dion Hatch

Visual Effects Editor:

Clay Marsh

Editor

Ross Albert

Production Designer

Larry Fulton

Art Director

Gae Buckley

Set Design

Richard Yanez

Set Decorator

Linda Spheeris

Special Effects

Rick Zarro

Ron Zarro

Rick Hill

Richard M. Bisetti

Michael Roundy

Paul Sabourin

George Zamora

Costume Design

Jami Burrows

Costume Supervisor

John Linsmeier

Make-up

James Lee McCoy

Special Make-up Effects

Ken Diaz

Hairstylist

Key:

Carol A. O'Connell

Jan Alexander

Title Design

R.E.D. Productions

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title/

Cinema Research

MUSIC

William Ross

Orchestrations

William Ross

Scott Smalley

Mark McKenzie

Chris Boardman

Scoring Mixer

John Richards

Supervising Music Editor

Steve McCroskey

Music Editor

Jim Harrison

Songs/Music Extracts

"The Good Old Days"

"The Little Rascals"

theme song by LeRoy

Shields; "You Are So

Beautiful" by Billy

Preston, Bruce Fisher,

performed by Bug Hall;

"L-O-V-E" by Bert

Kaempfert, Milt Gabler,

performed by Blake

McIver Ewing, Brittany

Ashton Holmes; "The

Air That I Breathe"

by Albert Hammond,

Mike Hazlewood,

performed by Bug Hall;

"Short People" by and

performed by Randy

Newman; "Colonel

Bogey" by Kenneth J.

Alford, performed by

John Foster Black Dyke

Mills Band; "Love Has

No Pride" by Eric Kaz,

Libby Titus, performed

by Rosanne Cash;

"Building the Blur",

"Testing the Beast"

by and performed by

George Foster;

"You Must Have Been

A Beautiful Baby" by

Johnny Mercer, Harry

Warren, performed

by Dr. John

Ballet Choreography

Nancy Gregory

Supervising Sound Editors

Richard L. Anderson

David Whittaker

Sound Editors

Mike Chock

James Christopher

Dean Beville

Julia Evershade

Michael Benevente

John Hulsman

Sound Recordist

Bradley Biggart

Supervising ADR Editor

Petra Bach

ADR Editors

Zack Davis

Donald Sylvester

Shelley Hinton Buck

Kevin Spears

Ian MacGregor-Scott

Lori Martino

Robert Ulrich

ADR Mixers

Doc Kane

Thomas J. O'Connell

ADR Recordists

Mike Boundry

Rick Canelli

Foley Editors

Donlee Jorgensen

Solange Schwalbe

Boisseau

Foley Mixer

Bruce Bell

Foley Recordist

Peter Smolian

Sound Mixer

Susumu Tokunow

Re-recording Mixers

Steve Maslow

Gregg Landaker

Foley Artists

Joan Rowe

Laura Macias

Stunt Co-ordinator

Shane Dixon

Animal Trainer

Gary Gero

Cast

Travis Tedford

Spanky

Bug Hall

Alfalfa

Brittany Ashton Holmes

Darla

Kevin Jamal Woods

Stymie

Zachary Mabry

Porky

Will Elliot Bagley

Buckwheat

Sam Saletta

Butch

Blake Jeremy Collins

Woim

Blake McIver Ewing

Waldo

Jordan Warkol

Froggy

Courtland Mead

Uh-Huh

Juliette Brewer

Mary Ann

Heather Karasek

Jane

Petey

Himself

Elmer

Himself

Mel Brooks

Mr Welling

Whoopi Goldberg

Buckwheat's Mom

Daryl Hannah

Miss Crabtree

Reba McEntire

A. J. Ferguson

Ashley Olsen

Mary-Kate Olsen

Twins

Raven-Symone

Stymie's Girlfriend

Lea Thompson

Ms Roberts

Donald Trump

Waldo's Dad

George Wendt

Lumberyard Clerk

Dan Carlton

Alfalfa's Dad

Eric 'Sparky' Edwards

Spanky's Dad

John Ashker

Chauffeur

Charles Noland

John Wesley

Amish Men

Alexandra Monroe King

Zoe Oakes

Darla's Friends

John Ashker

Michael Matzdorf

Race Announcers

Gary Johnson

Race Official

Joseph Ashton

Vincent Berry

Robert Hernandez

Davididen

Kris Krause

Kyle Lewis

Myles Marisco

Andy Reasnyder

Marcello Sanna-Pickett

Sean Wargo

Kenny Lee

Rascals

E.G. Daily

Froggy's Voice

7,444 feet

83 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour



He-men woman haters: Travis Tedford, Bug Hall

secretly ends in disaster when Alfalfa is pursued by Butch. Disguised in tutus, Spanky and Alfalfa cause mayhem during Darla's ballet recital. At the talent contest, Waldo

The Madness of King George

United Kingdom 1995

Director: Nicholas Hytner

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Rank

Production Companies

The Samuel Goldwyn Company
Channel Four Films
Close Call Films

Producers

Stephen Evans
David Parfitt

Line Producer

Mark Cooper

Production Co-ordinator

Vivien Jordan

Location Manager

Rachel Neale

2nd Unit Director

Tariq Anwar

Assistant Directors

Mary Sloan

Finn McGrath

Stuart Renfrew

Paul Higgins

Jeremy Murrell

Casting

Celestia Fox

Screenplay

Alan Bennett

Based on his stage play
'The Madness of
George III'

Script Supervisor

Jean Bourne

Director of Photography

Andrew Dunn

Steadicam Operator

Migel Kirtan

Camera Operators

Trevor Coop

Mike Frift

Ian Jackson

Video Operator

David Toft

Editor

Tariq Anwar

Production Designer

Ken Adam

Supervising Art Director

Martin Childs

Art Director

John Fenner

Set Decorator

Carolyn Scott

Storyboard Artists

Jane Clark

Paul Garner

Costume Design

Mark Thompson

Costume Supervisor

Sue Honeyborne

Make-up/Hair

Lisa Westcott

Title Design

Shaun Webb Graphic Design

Titles/Opticals

Peter Covey Film

Opticals/Peerless

Camera Company

Music

Adapted by George Fenton from the works of George Frederic Handel

Director of

Baroque Orchestra

Nicholas Kraemer

Orchestrations

George Fenton

Handbell Ringers

St Lawrence Cobham

Handbell Ringers

Music Supervisor

Eliza Thompson

Music Pre-production

Adrian Thomas

Supervising Sound Editor

Christopher Ackland

Dialogue Editor

Jim Shields

Foley Editor

Roger Ashton-Griffiths

Stan Fiferman

Sound Mixer

David Crozier

Sound Recordist

John Casali

Re-recording Mixers

Robin O'Donoghue

Dominic Lester

Foley Artists

Roy Baker

Jean Sheffield

Researcher

Miles Barton

Stunt Co-ordinators

Wayne Michaels

Gareth Milne

Horse Co-ordinators

Debbie Kaye

Dave Goodey

Cast

Nigel Hawthorne

George III

Helen Mirren

Queen Charlotte

Ian Holm

Willis

Rupert Graves

Greville

Amanda Donohoe

Lady Pembroke

Rupert Everett

Prince of Wales

Julian Rhind-Tutt

Duke of York

Julian Wadham

Pitt

Jim Carter

Fox

Geoffrey Palmer

Warren

Charlotte Curley

Amelia

Anthony Calf

Fitzroy

Matthew Lloyd Davies

Papandick

Adrian Scarborough

Fortnum

Paul Corrigan

Braun

John Wood

Thurlow

Nick Sampson

Sergeant At Arms

Jeremy Child

Black Rod

Nicholas Selby

Speaker

Barry Stanton

Sheridan

Straun Rodger

Dundas

Janine Duvitski

Margaret Nicholson

Caroline Harker

Mrs Fitzherbert

Iain Mitchell

Farmer

Roger Hammond

Baker

Celestine Randall

Lady Adam

Cyril Shaps

Pepys

Michael Grandage

Amputee

James Peck

Clive Brunt

Fergus Webster

Barry Gillespie

Joe Maddison

Willis' Attendants

Selina Cadell

Mrs Cordwell

Dermot Keane

Footman

Peter Woodthorpe

Clergyman

Robert Swann

1st MP

Alan Bennett

2nd MP

Collin Johnson

Roger Ashton-Griffiths

MPs

David Leon
Martin Jullier
Dan Hammond
Nick Irons
Footmen
Peter Bride-Kirk
Eve Camden
Thomas Copeland
Joanna Hall
Cassandra Halliburton
Russell Martin
Natalie Palys
Royal Children

9.936 feet
110 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

England, 1788. King George III's relations with his idle, pampered son, the Prince of Wales, are fast deteriorating. He isn't entirely popular with his subjects either, one of whom tries to stab him to death with a fruit knife after the State Opening of Parliament. The King's eccentric personal behaviour also gives cause for concern. One evening, he has a mild fit and is prescribed senna by his incompetent doctor. He seems to recover, but his antics subsequently grow ever more wilful. Prime Minister Pitt knows that if the King is declared unfit to rule, his own government will topple and he will be replaced by his arch-rival, the Whig leader, Fox, who has the support of the Prince of Wales.

Three quack doctors do their best to cure the King of his distemper, blistering him, taking his pulse and studying his stools. The Prince refuses to allow his mother, Queen Charlotte, anywhere near the King. However, the Queen's Lady-in-Waiting, Lady Pembroke, tells Pitt about a new physician, Dr Willis, who is reputed to be able to cure diseases of the mind. Willis is summoned to oversee George's treatment away from the court. Although the King's condition slowly improves, a bill has already been drawn up to declare the Prince of Wales as Regent. Queen Charlotte realises what this implies: if the bill is passed, George will never be able to regain power. She manages to smuggle herself into his chambers and warns him what is at stake. George pulls himself together, shaves off his beard and hurries to Westminster to prove in person that he is recovered. He arrives in the nick of time and is given a rousing welcome by government MPs. The Royal family is reunited.

As the film ends, an intertitle reveals that George may not, strictly speaking, have been mad at all, but was possibly suffering from an hereditary metabolic disorder known as porphyria that produces chemical changes in the body and symptoms similar to dementia.

Whether it be Anna Neagle deliciously prim as Queen Victoria, Charles Laughton in bellowing form as Henry VIII, or Laurence Olivier doing his Shakespeare turns, British cinema has always enjoyed basking in the shadow of monarchy. *The Madness of King George*, latest addition to the royalty genre, is the kind of movie that will go down well in what American showmen used to call "the better class of neighborhood". Adapted from an award-winning play, it comes complete with rolling countryside, castles, pageantry and court ritual. Characters

are decked out in full Georgian finery, with frock-coats and periwigs to the fore. *Mise-en-scène* is lovingly detailed.

Tear away the regal trappings, though, and you find a microscopic drama of the kind that Alan Bennett is famous for. In writing the original play, he acknowledged his debt to Roy Porter's *A Social History Of Madness*. The film works almost as a case study; the story of an individual subjected to the rigours of eighteenth-century medicine. That individual just happens to be the King, "the engine of the nation". When he falls ill, government stalls and a power vacuum is created.

Alan Bennett and director, Nicholas Hytner, are determined to destroy the mystique of majesty. By focusing intently on George's condition, they make him a sympathetic character, but hardly one who seems divinely ordained to rule. Private functions are the key: the King's deteriorating condition is first announced by his inability to fart. Doctors treat him with laxatives; spend much of their time poring over his faeces ("I've always found the stool more eloquent than the pulse" one quack proclaims), and make great play of his urine, which mysteriously turns blue.

Even when he is in robust health, he's an earthy sort, delighting in his nickname Farmer George. Pigs (something of a leitmotif in Bennett's work) are his favourite animals, and he has a ripe way with language which is utterly at odds with conventional courtly discourse. Nigel Hawthorne's exceptional performance never allows George to become an empty figure of fun. Although he blusters and rages, he is more victim than despot. The real comedy (and the film is often very funny) comes from the political feuding between Fox and Pitt, and the absurd pomposity of the Prince Regent, a louche, fat figure played with typical

conceit by Rupert Everett.

There are many stilted set-pieces in the picture; depictions of everything from the State Opening of Parliament to Handel renditions and bell-ringing concerts. But Hytner takes a Hogarthian pleasure in disrupting the excessive formality of such scenes. Jarring comic business is always going on at the edge of the frame. For instance, while the King and Queen sit complacently listening to music, the camera pulls back to reveal their courtiers behind them, fidgeting and sweating with boredom: convention demands that they must remain standing throughout the recital (even if pregnant), however long it lasts.

In a way, madness is a king's prerogative. For republicans, certainly, the very notion of monarchy is crazy by definition. Bennett laces his screenplay with constant, sly digs at Britain's current crop of beleaguered Royals. "To be the Prince of Wales is not a position; it is a predicament," the Prince Regent is heard to complain. "We must be more of a family," George tells his squabbling relatives as they make an all too transparent show of unity at the end of the film. We see disgruntled princes waving languidly at the crowds from the balcony, or from inside their carriages.

The Madness of King George is perhaps intended as a barbed, ironic vision of monarchy and manners, but the sharpness of its critique is somewhat blunted by all the English Heritage style imagery on display. At least, it's far from a filmed play. Thanks to Hytner's brisk, confident direction, which accommodates some eccentric, very actorly performances from the likes of John Wood and Geoffrey Palmer without sacrificing tempo, it manages the rare feat of being both cinematic and theatrical.

Geoffrey Macnab



Many a slip: Helen Mirren, Nigel Hawthorne, Amanda Donohoe

Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)

USA 1993

Dir: Allison Anders

Certificate

15
Distributor
Metro Tartan
Production Company
HBO Showcase
In association with
Film Four International
present
A Cineville Production
Executive Producers
Christoph Henkel
Colin Callender

Producers
Daniel Hassid
Carl-Jan Colpaert
Executive in Charge of Production
Robert Strauss
Co-producers
William Ewart
Francine Lefrak
Line Producer
Whitney R. Hunter
Production Co-ordinator
Cari Schaeffer
Location Manager
Robert Sneider
Location Consultant
Sally Vargas
Post-production Co-ordinator
Gregor von Bismarck

Assistant Directors
Matthew J. Clark
Jim Goldthwait
Catherine Anderson

Casting
Betsy Fels
Screenplay
Allison Anders
Story Consultants
Michelle Ovalle
Angelo Martinez
Devon Anders
Script Supervisor
Barbara Tuss
Director of Photography
Rodrigo Garcia
B Camera Operator
Mauro Fiore
Supervising Editor
Richard Chew
Editors
Kathryn Himoff
Tracy Granger
Production Designer
Jane Stewart
Art Director
Bradley Wisham
Set Design
Chris Miller
Supervising Set Decorator
Cindy Johnson
Set Decorator
Shirley Starks
Set Dresser
Steven Rick
Scott Dangerfield
Ryan Wilson
Production Illustrator
Shannon Thompson
Scenic Artists
Key:
Michael Biggie
Kate Lewis
Storyboard Artist
Pave L. Canti
Graffiti Artists
Tommy Cassillas
Phillip Long
Monica Lutton
Marlene Colomo
Costume Design
Susan Bertram
Costume Supervisor
Kimberly Martinez
Make-up/Hair
Jay A. Wijbe
Tattoo Designer
Michael Contreras
Title Design
Wendorf Associates
Titles/Opticals
Title House Inc.

Music

John Taylor
Music Consultants
Monica Lutton
Gabriel Arellano
Music Producer/Arranger
Mark Wolfson
Carlton Kaller
Music Supervisor
Jellybean Benitez
Music Editors
Carlton Kaller
Bill Black
Music Mixer/Recorder
Mark Wolfson
Songs/Music Extracts
"Whittier Boulevard
(Echo Park Avenue)"
by James J. Espinosa,
William Garcia, Thee
Midnites, performed
by The Crusados; "El
Corridos de Los
Hermonas Mendoza,
by and performed by
Los Campesinos de
Michoacan; "More
Bounce to the Ounce"
by Rodger Troutman,
performed by Zapp;
"Going in Circles"
by Anita Poree, Jerry
Peters, performed by
Friends of Distraction;
"Chicano Power" by
Romeo Prado, Thee
Midnites, performed
by Thee Midnites;
"So Ruff, So Tuff"
by Rodger Troutman,
Larry Troutman,
performed by Rodger
Troutman; "Weather
42" by D'Wayne
Wiggins, performed
by Tony, Toni, Toné;
"Doin' 'It To Death"
by and performed by
James Brown;
"Lorraine" by Mark
Fosson, Taras
Prodaniuk, Edward
Tree, performed by
Mark Fosson; "Catch
You on the Rebound"
by H. Smith, J. Hoover,
J. Winn, performed
by Brendon Wood;
"I've Got Two Lovers"
by William (Smokey)
Robinson, Robert
Gutierrez, Bobby
Ramirez, James Carter,
performed by Lighter
Shade of Pale;
"Dreaming Casually"
by Garcia, Rendon,
Thee Midnites,
performed by Los
Lobos; "Tales From
the Westside" by Ernie
Gonzales, Frank
Villareal, performed
by Proper Dos; "The
Ghetto" by Donny
Hathaway, Lee Roy
Hutson, performed
by Donny Hathaway;
"I Think You've Got
Your Fools Mixed Up"
by A. Smith, performed
by Brendon Wood;
"Girls It Ain't Easy" by
Ronald Dunbar, Edythe
Wayne, performed by
4 Corners; "Suavecito"
by Pablo Tellez, Abel
Zarate, Richard Bean,
performed by 4
Corners; "Hey DJ." by
Steven Hague, Malcolm
McLaren, Larry Price,
Ronald Larkins, Ronald
Gutierrez, Bobby
Ramirez, performed by

Lighter Shade of
Brown; "Don't Let No
One Get You Down"
by Allen, Brown,
Dickerson, Goldstein,
Jordan, Levitin, Miller,
Scott, performed by
War; "The Good Hit"
by Jason Vasquez,
Tyrone Pacheco, DJ
Muggs, DJ Ralph,
performed by
Funkdoobiest; "Is This
All There Is" by Louis
Perez, David Hidalgo,
performed by Los
Lobos; "Run, Catch
& Kill" by Ricardo,
"Sergio", Roger Tausz,
Larry Pressley,
performed by Boss;
"Scandalous" by N.
Vidal, E. Vidal, Gustavo
Gonzales, Jack
Gonzales, Jose
Martinez, performed
by Psycho Realm;
"If the Papes Come"
by J. Davis, A. Shaheed,
P. Hull, performed by
A Tribe Called Quest;
"Nothing But A Dealer"
by Joey Reano per-
formed by The Loco Jo

Choreography
Maria Leone
Sound Design
Leonard Marcel
Dialogue/ADR Editor
Peter Carlstedt
ADRMixer
Robert Deschaine
ADR Recordist
David Jobe
Foley Supervisor
Jeremy Pitts
Sound Recordist
Mark Harris
Sound Mixer
Mary Jo Devenney
Dolby stereo
consultant:
Steve Smith
Re-recording Mixer
Ken S. Polk
Post-production Sound Co-ordinator
James P. Sweet
Sound Effects Editor
Adam Kopaid
Foley Artists
Sean Rowe
Joan Rowe
Stunt Co-ordinator
Eddie Perez

Cast

Angel Aviles
Sad Girl
Seidy Lopez
Mousie
Jacob Vargas
Ernesto
Mario Marron
Giggles
Jessie Borrego
El Duran
Magali Alvarado
La Blue Eyes
Julian Reyes
Big Sleepy
Bertilla Damas
Rachel
Art Esquer
Shadow
Christina Solis
Baby Doll
Nick Salinas
Efren
Gabriel Gonzalez
Sleepy
Danny Trejo
Frank
Rosa Segura
Dimples
Salma Hayek
Gata
Noah Verdugo
Chuco
John Rangel
Snoopy
Panchito Gomez
Joker Bird
Maurice Bernard
Creep
Eddie Perez
Sir Sleepy

Marita De Leon
Alexis Midrano
River Valley Girls
Leigh Hamilton
Social Worker
Terri Phillips
Trendy Girl
Carlos Rivas
Sad Girl's Dad
Kid Frost
Mousie's Dad
Nolida Lopez
Monica Lutton
Devine
Veronica Arellano
Angelo Martinez
Memo Vargas
John Robles
Cesario Montano
Real Gang Members
Playing Themselves
Brittany Parkin
Graciella
Guy Boyd
Priest
Cesario Montano
Squeaky
Sissy Boyd
Tia Elena
Jessica Estrada
Young Sad Girl
Gloria Gibson
Young Mousie
Eliana Alexander
Mousie's Mother
Suzanne Vargas
Ernesto's Mother
Tomassa Santiago
Ernesto's Aburlita
Carlos Rivas
Sad Girl's Father
Gloria Vargas
Rubens Valenzuela
Big Sleeping Kids
Alexis Midrano
Crystal
Adrian Amano
Jennifer
Tiffany Anders
Spike Jonze
Jason Lee
Teenage Drug
Customers
Jonathan Chapin
Allison Rockwell
Kurt Voss
Marcus de Leon
Peter Kline
Police
Abbe Wool
Nicole Holofcener
Wardens
Terri Lynn Phillips
Kim Martinez
Susan Bertram
Trendy Girls
Alexander Stephano
Mailman
Nina Belanger
Mirabina Jaimes
Vivis Cortez
Elva Rivero Players
Robert 'Elvez' Lopez
Party DJ
David Hidaigo
Conrad Lozano
Cesar Rosas
Steve Berlin
Louis Perez
Victor Binetti
Los Lobos

8,536 feet
95 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
De Luxe

Sad Girl and Mousie, two Chicana teenagers, are members of Echo Park Home Girl gang in Los Angeles. Once best friends, they have fallen out over Ernesto, a local drug dealer who has fathered children by both of them. Without telling either of them, he buys a custom-built Mini Truck called Suavecito, which El Duran, a rival gangster from River Valley, feels is rightfully his. Sad Girl and Mousie meet to fight a duel of honour, but they finally relent. At exactly the same moment, Ernesto is killed by a customer, and his assistant, Whisper, wounded in the leg. The boys' gang blames El Duran and swears revenge.

The girls go to collect a former gang member, Giggles, released from prison. To their horror, she talks of going straight and getting a job. Giggles soon becomes romantically involved with Sleepy, the custom car artist responsible for Suavecito's design. Mousie and Sad Girl find out where the boys have hidden the truck. At a gang meeting, they decide to sell it to raise money for their children and Whisper's hospital bills. Meanwhile, the boys' gang, who planned to enter the truck in a custom car rally, discover it is missing and assume El Duran has stolen it.

Sad Girl's sister Alicia (nicknamed 'La Blue Eyes') is devastated when her penpal, Juan Temido - a recently released prisoner - stops writing to her. Knowing him to be a notorious philander, the girls take Alicia to a dance where she will meet him and discover what a cad he really is. But Juan is really El Duran, and just as Alicia discovers his true identity, Ernesto's brother shoots him dead. Later, the gang learns that Suavecito was borrowed by a boy who wrecked it in an accident. In a drive-by hit intended for Ernesto's brother, Sleepy's young daughter is killed by El Duran's girlfriend. All assemble at the concluding funeral.

In her feature debut, *Gas Food Lodging*, director Allison Anders explored a downmarket but poetically rendered *demi monde* of trailer parks and roadside diners, located somewhere between *Bagdad Café* and *Paris, Texas* (the film on which she cut her teeth as a production assistant after deluging Wim Wenders with fan letters and requests for work). *Mi Vida Loca* finds similar territory in an urban setting, Los Angeles' Echo Park, once the home of bungalow-dwelling movie stars in the 20s and now the stomping ground of the dispossessed Hispanic Community.

As she did in her earlier films, Anders pivots the plot around the lives of single mothers and working class women, celebrating female friendship as a balm to the callous damage inflicted by men. Depicting a milieu seldom seen in mainstream films and giving voice to speakers rarely heard (voice-overs by several characters narrate the film throughout), Anders sets herself a difficult task: balancing verisimilitude with a more personal elegiac vision. *Mi Vida Loca* often comes precariously close to collapsing under the weight of

these aspirations. Nonetheless, such an aesthetic tension is necessary to encode the genetic blueprint of the 'individual in conflict with neighbourhood' plot in visual terms. *Mean Streets* is the obvious template here (far more so than the closer-to-home *Boyz n the Hood*) evoking an elliptical style of narration, indirectly through the use of voice-overs. Yet, where Scorsese's work springs from autobiography, Anders' seems to be more painstakingly constructed from pre-production research.

Anders casts members of real gangs (under whose protection the film was made) in some major roles, such as Whisper the teenage drug baroness. Consequently, certain performances are stiff and paradoxically unnatural. Yet, what it loses in performative polish, is more than compensated for by accurate dress, language, setting and car design.

Trying hard not to patronise its subjects, *Mi Vida Loca* feels at times like a dramatised article by eminent LA social geographer, Mike Davis. Poverty, discrimination, police harassment and a culture of violence are all duly noted and accounted for, resulting in such painfully preachy speeches as: "We girls need new skills 'cause by the time our boys are 21, they're either in prison, disabled or dead. That's fucked up, but that's the way it is." Yet the film is not so naively didactic that it forgets to show the speaker, Giggles (a fine performance by newcomer Marlo Marron), despairingly perusing an application for a job she knows she will never get. It's easy to be scathing about the banal sentimentality and confused moral sense of these and other speeches, especially the concluding lines "Women don't use pistols to prove a point, women use weapons for love", but even easier to forget that sometimes people talk like this, especially women reared on cheap romance and the religion of the gun.

Mi Vida Loca is redeemed by its many well-observed touches. When Sad Girl and Mousie remember how they were so close that even their periods were synchronised, or the gang refuses to raise their hands to signal their assent because it reminds them of school, the sense of authenticity blazes with warmth. Realism is often assuaged by an evocative use of slow-motion and contrapuntal editing. The soundtrack of classic Latin pop and original music is worth the price of admission alone. *Mi Vida Loca* manages to be a female-centred film without an overbearing feminist political agenda. Indeed, the homegirls are often enduringly sexist, a point especially well illustrated in a witty ensemble scene in McDonald's where a discussion about men serves almost as a riposte to the 'Like a Virgin' dialogue in *Reservoir Dogs*. Anders is to collaborate with Tarantino in the forthcoming portmanteau film, *Four Rooms*. Like him, Anders has an instinctive feel for low-life dialogue and a taste for experimental narration that still needs polish, but she also shows tremendous promise.

Leslie Felperin

Muriel's Wedding

Australia 1994

Director: P. J. Hogan

Certificate

15

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

GiBy 2000 presents

In association with

Australian Film

Finance Corporation

A House and

Moorhouse Films

production

Producers

Lynda House

Jocelyn Moorhouse

Associate Producers

Michael D. Aglion

Tony Mahood

Production Co-ordinator

Rowena Talacko

Production Manager

Catherine Bishop

Unit Managers

Simon Hawkins

Queensland:

Nick Fenby

Location Managers

Patricia Blunt

Queensland:

Russell Boyd

Assistant Directors

Tony Mahood

John Martin

Karen Mahood

Angela McPherson

Casting

Alison Barrett

Screenplay

P. J. Hogan

Story

P. J. Hogan

Jocelyn Moorhouse

Script Supervisor

Daphne Paris

Director of Photography

Martin McGrath

Camera Operators

David Williamson

Helicopter:

Andrew Flannigan

Opticals

Roger Cowland

Editor

Jill Bilcock

Production Designer

Patrick Reardon

Art Director

Hugh Bateup

Set Decorators

Jane Murphy

Glen W. Johnson

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Ray Fowler

Costume Design

Terry Ryan

Wardrobe Supervisor

Michelle Leonard

Make-up/Hair Supervisor

Noriko Watanabe

Title Design

Peter Long

Titles/Opticals

Optical & Graphic

Music

Peter Best

Music Supervisor

Chris Gough

Songs

"Dancing Queen",

"Waterloo",

"Fernando", "Mamma

Mia", "I Do, I Do, I Do,

I Do, I Do" by Benny

Andersson, Bjorn

Ulvaeus, Stig Anderson,

performed by ABBA;

"The Tide is High" by

J. Holt, performed by

by Peter Allen; "We've

Only Just Begun" by

Williams, Nichols;

"Hotcha", "Coffee

& Tea" by Peter Best

Choreography

John O'Connell

Sound

David Lee

Glenn Newnham

Livia Ruzic

Roger Savage

Foley

Gerard Long

Steve Burgess

ADR Recordist

Paul Pirola

Dolby stereo

consultant:

Steve Murphy

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rocky McDonald

Cast

Toni Collette

Muriel Heslop

Bill Hunter

Bill Heslop

Rachel Griffiths

Rhonda

Jeanie Brynan

Betty Heslop

Gennie Nevinston

Deidre

Matt Day

Brice

Daniel Lapaine

David Van Arkle

Sophie Lee

Tania

Belinda Jarrett

Janine

Rosalind Hammond

Cheryl

Pippa Grandison

Nicole

Chris Haywood

Ken Blundell

Daniel Wyllie

Perry

Gabby Millgate

Joanie

Katie Saunders

Penelope

Dene Kermont

Malcolm

Susan Prior

Girl at Wedding

Nathan Kaye

Chook

Cecily Polson

Tania's Mother

Rob Steele

Higgins

Gennieve Picot

Store Detective

Richard Sutherland

Constable Saunders

Steve Smith

Constable Gillespie

Jeanin Lee

Chinese Waitress

Jon-Claire Lee

Chinese Maitre'd

Kuni Hashimoto

Akira

Ken Senga

Victor Keinosuke

Des Rodgers

Island MC

Rohan Jones

Scott Hall-Watson

Craig Olson

Justin Witham

Restaurant Boys

Rodney Arnold

Ejected Diner

Steve Cox

Cruise Taxi Driver

John Gaden

Doctor

Heather Mitchell

Penne Hackforth-Jones

Bridal Managers

Heidi Lapaine

Kirsty Hinchcliffe

Bridal Assistants

Diane Smith

Physiotherapist

Rhonda's Taxi Driver

Robert Alexander

Barrister

Troy Hardy

Young Boy

Robyn Pitt Owen

Singer at Muriel's

Wedding

Annie Byron

Rhonda's Mother

Jacqueline Linke

Alvaro Marques

Fiona Sullivan

Ineke Rapp

Julian Garner

Press at Muriel's

Wedding

Vincent Ball

Priest

John Hoare

Well-wisher at

Muriel's Wedding

Frankie Davidson

Sergeant

Louise Cullen

Deidre's Friend

Basil Clarke

Funeral Priest

John Walton

Taxi Driver

9,463 feet

105 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Porpoise Spit, a small town in Australia. When Muriel catches the bride's bouquet at a wedding, her old school friends, led by the vicious Tania, cruelly insist that she gives it up since no-one will ever marry her. She is then reported to the police for wearing a stolen dress. Only the intervention of her father, a local political bigwig, prevents them from questioning her. Muriel has neither job, nor friends. Her contemporaries tell her she's an embarrassment. When her father secures her some work in his lover Deirdre's beauty salon, Muriel cashes a blank cheque intended for Deirdre and takes off to the Pacific island where Tania and her gang are on holiday.

There she finds the gang and Rhonda, a schoolfriend none of them has seen for years. Disliking the others, Rhonda adopts Muriel, who spins her a story about the holiday being her last fling before she gets married. On returning to Porpoise Spit, having had a great time, Muriel decides not to face her father and follows Rhonda on to Sydney. They share a flat, enjoying themselves until the day that Rhonda collapses and a cancerous tumour is diagnosed. She loses the use of her legs, and Muriel, renamed Mariel, takes care of her. In bridal shops, assistants take photos of her in dresses to show to her "ailing mother". When Rhonda discovers these, Mariel breaks down, complaining that everything would be okay if only she could marry.

Rhonda discovers she'll never walk again. Meanwhile Mariel's father is facing corruption charges. Mariel answers a newspaper ad, agreeing to marry Brice - a rich, handsome South African swimmer who needs Australian nationality. The wedding is a grand affair with all of Porpoise Spit invited, but Mariel's mother arrives late and her daughter fails to see her. Some time later, Mariel's mother commits suicide. After the funeral Mariel decides to leave Brice. As Muriel once again, she tells Rhonda she would like to take care of her. The two set off for Sydney.

Muriel would make a good guest for Oprah Winfrey. After a wretched childhood, she begins to make a new life for herself. Then her

only friend contracts cancer, her father is exposed as a corrupt politician, and her mother commits suicide. Yet it's more than the run of misery that lends her *Oprah* potential. Despite everything, she also pulls through - the perfect-prime time confessional pay-off. Indeed, P. J. Hogan, the Australian debutante director, explains Muriel's journey in terms we'd recognise from television pop psychology. "Her victory," he says, "was to find out who she was." Hogan plays this melodramatic stuff for laughs, using humour as a bulwark against mawkishness. But slipped into this comedy is a morality tale, suggesting the downside of psychobabble through its depiction of Muriel's self-obsession. Although we are invited to approve of Muriel's growth, and cheer along at the film's close when she and Rhonda take joyous leave of Porpoise Spit, her behaviour along the way suggests an underdog's potential for a blind cruelty equal to that she receives from Tania. Muriel is so lost in her fantasies of triumph that she forgets all about her disconsolate mother and abandons Rhonda for her Prince Charming.

Porpoise Spit is an Australian version of the small town so often depicted in the American cinema of the 80s, where homely qualities barely veil routine dysfunction. While there's little that's really sinister in Hogan's town beyond a general unhappiness and frustration, this is tarted up in the gaudiest of clothes (production and costume design are well over-the-top). The holiday scenes especially are rendered in dazzling colours. Muriel's family home is exaggerated in a different way. Her father and siblings form a collection of grotesques that wouldn't be out of place in a Harry Enfield sketch, the father lamenting continually the likelihood that his children will turn out to be dim-witted failures (and so establishing a self-fulfilling prophesy which - the film's pop psychology tells us - Muriel battles against).

The heightened colours, the melodramatic sweep of the story, the dashes from wretched reality to drunken fantasy - all these are features the film shares with the pop music Hogan employs. He spent months wooing Abba, eventually persuading the band to let him use six of their songs. Abba is Muriel's favourite group, and she acts out her daydreams to their songs. When life is good, she says, it feels just like 'Dancing Queen.' But in her behaviour lies an age-old cautionary tale about the dangers of an unbridled fantasy life. Hogan's poignant take on the theme can be traced in the way that Muriel assembles her wedding album: as a *Madame Bovary* for the *Photo Love* generation. The tragic touches - Rhonda collapsing in the middle of a particularly enjoyable night of sex with a couple of sailors (later, finding herself paralysed) - are only plausible in such an outsize context. In essence *Muriel's Wedding* is an intentionally humorous dayglo soap opera, cogent and occasionally affecting.

Robert Yates

Nobody's Fool

USA 1994

Director: Robert Benton

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

In association with

Capella International

Presents a Scott

Rudin/Cinehaus

production

Executive Producer

Michael Hausman

Producers

Scott Rudin

Arlene Donovan

Associate Producer

Scott Ferguson

Production Co-ordinator

Anne Nevin

Unit Production Managers

Michael Hausman

Unit Supervisor

Gerry Robert Byrne

Location Manager

Daniel Strol

Post-production Supervisor

Gerry Robert Byrne

Assistant Directors

Joe Camp III

Chitra F. Mojibai

Richard Oswald

Casting

Ellen Chenoweth

Associate:

Jill Greenberg Sands

Robert Benton

Based on the novel by

Richard Russo

Script Supervisor

Robin Squibb

Director of Photography

John Bailey

Camera Operator

Jon

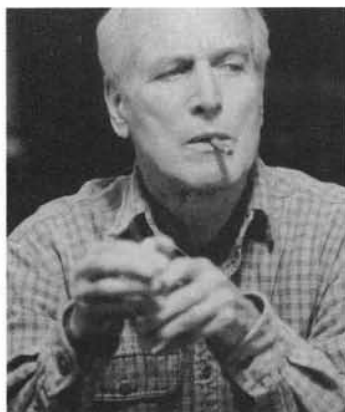
Donald "Sully" Sullivan is a 60-year-old construction worker, perpetually down on his luck in the chilly small town of North Bath, NY. He lodges with his old school teacher Miss Beryl, whose banker son is determined to get rid of him. With his slow-witted friend Rub, he works on and off for Carl, a hard-headed, philandering local entrepreneur. Sully struggles with a horribly wounded knee, sustained while working for Carl without insurance, and is also bogged down in a fruitless legal quest to secure compensation. His only consolations are flirting with Carl's attractive but unhappy wife Toby, and endeavouring to steal his snow-blower.

Hitching home from a loading job that has gone wrong, Sully gets picked up on the road by his son Peter and family, who are visiting North Bath for Thanksgiving with Sully's ex-wife Vera. The atmosphere is strained – not just between Sully and Peter, whom he walked out on as a child, but between Peter and his wife, who are on the verge of splitting up – but Sully still finds himself invited to his ex-wife's house for Thanksgiving. There he encounters a level of domestic chaos which he is unable to cope with, and leaves, unaware that Peter's son Will has stowed away in his pick-up.

Sully starts to build relationships; first with his grandson, then with Peter who, it turns out, has recently lost his job teaching at a university. Sully still makes plenty of mistakes – at one point abandoning Will outside in the cold while looking over his dead father's old house, which he has let run to rack and ruin – but he finally seems to be learning to face up to the idea of family. When Peter's wife walks out, Sully offers him a job. Much to Rub's disgust he accepts. Trying to catch Rub, who has stormed off, Sully gets in the most serious of several rows with the town's policeman, and punches him in the face.

Sully's minor irresponsibility is nothing compared to that of Miss Beryl's son who, when a big property deal falls through, runs off leaving most of the town out of pocket. Miss Beryl, who does not have long to live, pays off Sully's debts on his father's old house. Toby walks out on Carl and asks Sully to go with her to Hawaii, but he eventually decides not to. Before commencing his week in jail, Sully helps Peter begin to patch up his marriage, and he is allowed out of prison to be a pall-bearer at Miss Beryl's funeral.

This warm, multi-layered adaptation of Robert Russo's novel makes a worthy if unobtrusive addition to Robert Benton's block-busting track record as a screenwriter, which includes *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Superman*, and *Kramer vs. Kramer*. A small town tale of dysfunctional folk learning to love, *Nobody's Fool* forsakes the showy start-ups and emotional pyrotechnics of *Kramer vs. Kramer* for a low-key intelligence and an impressive attention to emotional detail. "Do you know what mum's worst fear is?" the abandoned



Another cool hand: Paul Newman

son asks the absentee father, "That your life has been fun".

It's heartening to see a major Hollywood production focus so unapologetically on a major character who is almost eligible for his free bus-pass. Paul Newman's Sully gets to run the gamut of venerable guy emotions slightly beyond the usual A to B. He's not around just to dispense curmudgeonly but loving wisdom to the young folk. He is also allowed to have relationships with people (well, Jessica Tandy) who are even older than he is. Newman can do orneriness as well as any man alive, and he manages to create an authentic sense of the poignancy of someone still scrabbling for a living when he'd be better off putting his feet up. Tandy's combination of strength and fragility, meanwhile, has never seemed stronger or more fragile. Her meditations on mortality would have been unsettlingly poignant even if she hadn't just died in real life.

Away from their accustomed centre stage, the younger generation come out of this film pretty well too. This is certainly one of Melanie Griffiths' more dignified performances – she imbues the phrase "Watch out for that mean-ass dog" with more meaning than one would have thought it was ever equipped to carry. And it's odd that Bruce Willis has been said to be less than ecstatic about having his name associated with *Nobody's Fool*, as he is unusually three-dimensional in it. Perhaps that's why: maybe he thinks he is just too convincing as a brilliantine scuzzball.

It is rare in a modern American film to see a small town setting used as more than just shorthand for nothing much in particular. But there is a real sense here of relationships – particularly between the characters of Willis and Newman – striding on down through the years, taking both animosity and fondness, success and failure in their stride. There is one strikingly beautiful shot when the camera closes in on Tandy's Miss Beryl, who has had a stroke, and the picture decays into a celluloid snowstorm. This is one of two moments when Benton's direction steps out of the everyday and aspires to flamboyance. The other, when two little boys squabble in the toilet over who gets to pee first, we could probably have done without.

Ben Thompson

Once Were Warriors

New Zealand 1994

Director: Lee Tamahori

Certificate
18
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Company
Communicado
In association with
The New Zealand Film Commission
Avalon Studios
New Zealand On Air

Producer
Robin Scholes
Film Unit Production
Executive
Sue Thompson
Production Co-ordinator
Carol J. Paewai
Production Manager
Janet McIver
Unit Manager
Neville Howe
Location Manager
Peta Sinclair
Assistant Directors
Chris Short
Robin Murphy
Tiwai Reedy

Casting
Don Selwyn
Wellington:
Riwa Brown
Screenplay
Riwa Brown
Based on the novel
by Alan Duff
Script Adviser
Ian Mune
Continuity
Melissa Wikaire
Director of Photography
Stuart Dryburgh
Opticals
Brian Scadden
Editor
Michael Horton
Production Designer
Michael Kane
Art Director
Shayne Radford
Costume Design
Michael Kane
Wardrobe Supervisor
Pauline Bowkett

Make-up
Debra East
Carvings/Tattoo Design
Guy Moana
Hairstylist
Peter Underdown
Titles
Gavin Bradley
Music
Murray Grindlay
Murray McNabb
Maori Music Consultant
Hirini Melbourne
Songs
"Give Me Time"
by Ryan Monga,
performed by Mere
Boynnton; "Here is My
Heart" by D. Karaka,
T. Renata, C. Tumahai,
performed by Rena
Owen, Temuera
Morris; "Home-
grown" by C. Tumahai,
D. Karaka, M. Watene,
G. Joll, T. Nepia, R.J.
Lunden, performed
by Charlie Tumahai;
"Ragga Girl" by D.
Hapeta, M. Hapeta,
performed by Upper
Hutt Posse; "Rua
Kenema" by D. Grace,
performed by Survival;
"Judgement Day" by
B. Taite, performed by
Brother Zeb; "So Much
Soul" by GAB,
performed by Gifted
and Brown; "U Know
(I Like It)" by M. Gillies,

performed by Merenia;
"What's the Time Mr
Wolf" by Hareuia,
performed by
Southside of Bombay;
"Look What You've
Done (Lonely Blues)";
"E Ipoi" by Prince Tui
Teka; "Karanga", "Hoki
Mai" performed by
Taukiri Thomas; "This
is the Day" performed
by Avondale
PIC Youth; "Waiaata at
Tengi" by Riwa Brown,
Toby Curtis
Haka Choreography
Kepe Stirling
Sound Design
Kit Rollings
Supervising Dialogue
Annie Collins
Sound Editors
Don Paulin
Ray Beentjes
Dialogue:
Emma Haughton
Sound Manager
John Neil
Sound Recordist
Graham Morris
Foley Recordist
Helen Luttrell
Sound Mixer
Michael Hedges
Sound Transfers
John Van der Reyden
Foley Artists
Sally Stopforth
Beth Tredray
Consultants
Tucker/Endeavour
Murray Newey
Judith Trye
John Barnett
Toby Curtis
Fight Co-ordinator
Robert Bruce

Cast
Rena Owen
Beth Heke
Temuera Morrison
Jake Heke
Mamaengara Kerr-Bell
Grace Heke
Julian Arahanga
Nig Heke
Taungara Emile
Boogie Heke
Rachael Morris Jnr
Polly Heke
Joseph Kairau
Huata Heke
Clifford Curtis
Bully
Pete Smith
Dooley
George Henare
Bennett
Mere Boynnton
Mavis
Shannon Williams
Toot
Calvin Tuteao
Taka
Ray Bishop
King Hitter
Ian Mune
Judge
Te Whatanui Skipworth
TeTupaea
RangiMota
Matawai
Robert Pollock
Policeman
Jessica Wilcox
Policewoman
Stephen Hall
Prosecuting Officer
WikiOman
Youth Advocate
Israel Williams
Johnathon Wiremu
Youths

Richard Meihana
Taunter in Court
Edna Stirling
Ngawai Simpson
Women
SpikeKem
Old Drunk
Arona Risetto
Nig's Friend
Fran Viveare
Nig's Girlfriend
Brian Kairau
Joking Man
Outside Pub
Charlie Tumahai
Karaoke Singer
TamaRenata
Party Guitarist
Guy Moana
Evicted Partygoer/
Pub Customer
Maree Moschonas
Gang Rape Victim
RiwaBrown
Bully's Girlfriend
MacHona
Percy Robinson
Jason Kerapa
Robbie Ngauma
James Dean Wilson
Chris Mason
Core Gang Members

Brain Kairau
Marshall Kairau
Joseph Te Whiu
Jim Ngaata
David Rare
Donald Allen
Charles Marsh
Winstone Bedgood
PikiMark
Royal Waa
Jack Grace
Manuel Apiata
George Tiopira
Maru Nihoniho
Jaye Cassidy
Vivienne Wilson
Hiraina Kuene
Thomasina Perana
Jake's Mates

9,245 feet
103 minutes

Dolbys Stereo
In colour
Eastman Colour

Jake and Beth live with their five children in a poor suburb of Auckland, New Zealand. Jake has just lost his job and Boogie, his teenage son, has been cautioned yet again by the police. The couple host a party while their 13-year-old daughter Grace looks after the smaller kids. She promises Boogie she will accompany him to his court appearance the following day. During the party, Nig, the eldest son, alienated from his father, turns up to ask his mother for money. But Beth finds the house-keeping money has disappeared and when she starts quarrelling with Jake, who has been drinking and gambling it away, he beats her up.

Next day Grace cleans up the mess and takes Boogie to court where they learn he is to be sent to reform school. Beth is devastated. Meanwhile, Nig is initiated into the local gang. Weeks later, Jake and Beth are still distant, with Jake spending all his time drinking with friends. *Rapprochement* occurs when Beth persuades Jake to take the family to visit Boogie. They hire a car and take a picnic. The visit goes fairly well but on the return journey Jake stops off at his favourite bar. Beth takes the children home in a taxi. Grace is angry at her mother for allowing her father to treat them so badly.

That night Jake holds another impromptu party. Beth refuses to join him. Jake's friend Bully slips into Grace's room and rapes her, threatening to do worse if she tells her parents. The following day, Beth, sensing something is wrong, tries to talk to Grace but she runs away to visit her friend Toot, who lives in a car. When he tries to kiss her affectionately she again runs away. While Beth and a friend are out searching for her, Grace returns home. Her father shouts at her for refusing to kiss her "Uncle Bully" goodnight. She goes into the back yard and hangs herself from a tree.

Beth finds her. On the following day she arranges a traditional Maori funeral. During the ceremony, Jake stays at home drinking with friends. Beth returns, having asked Toot to join

the family. Later, she reads Grace's diary and discovers the truth. She goes to confront Bully in the local bar. At first Jake refuses to believe her, but after seeing the diary, he attacks Bully. Beth walks out, telling Jake she is leaving him for good and taking the children with her.

● Celebrated as the top-grossing film of all time in New Zealand, *Once Were Warriors* is also the first Maori work to reach an international art-house audience. In terms of genre, however, it fits neatly with recent Afro-American urban films in dealing with a community disenfranchised through economics and race. Rap music and a punchy credits sequence indicate that, for director Lee Tamahori, the genre connection is important. Quick-fire editing and burnished visuals give the film a rich appearance, far from the sober, social-realist tradition that the subject matter might ordinarily suggest. In style then, this story of an imploding dysfunctional family borrows more from Hollywood melodrama than from Ken Loach. Although the film is adapted from Alan Duff's novel, the producer/scriptwriter team of Robin Scholes and Riwa Brown agreed to "shape it more to Beth's story". With Beth as the emergent protagonist, *Warriors* is thus clearly a woman's comment on the status quo, gaining much of its dynamism from Rena Owen's sparky performance as the matriarch.

Nevertheless, *Warriors* also shares with such films as *Boyz n the Hood* a concern with male codes of behaviour and social emasculation. Physical strength is all that these adult men have left for themselves. The camera lingers on their musculature, emphasising an erotic quality which Beth seems at first to admire. Jake, having lost his job, finds other ways to prove himself, whether by drinking his mates under the table or punching out Beth. It is perhaps this view of the working class Maori male that has made Duff's novel so controversial. His characterisation of Jake treads a delicate line between the negative stereotype of a wife-beater and a more complex psychological por-

trayal. In the film, however, Jake's behaviour is more obviously the result of his alienation from his Maori roots. His gambling, drinking and mistreatment of his wife mark him out as a victim of the corrupt and decayed values of the Europeans. Beth, reminding Jake that his forebears were slaves, tells him: "You're still a slave to your fist, the drink, yourself..."

In contrast, Jake's sons Nig and Boogie learn to channel their aggression and disaffection into more ritualistic expressions of anger. The local gang that Nig joins is a very urban tribe. Augmenting shades and leather jackets with myriad tattoos, the members seem to be nodding towards some sort of tradition – the initiation ceremony even includes a punch-up with the leader. Yet the cosmetic, gestural nature of these warrior clichés becomes clear in scenes shot in cool shades of blue – the gang look more like style guerillas than anything more effective. It is Boogie who gets inducted into more serious Maori rites, learning tribal dances and the philosophy that inspires them from a social worker at the reform school. When Boogie smashes the windows in the school hall, the worker tells him: "You think your fist is your weapon. When I finish with you, your mind will be your weapon, which you will carry inside."

Spiritual loss is the film's ultimate diagnosis, particularly of a kind associated with the land. The opening shot of green hills proves to be a billboard inscribed with the words "En/power". The camera pulls away revealing a tangle of motorways bathed in a nicotine yellow haze. These polluted surroundings are far from Aoteara, the promised haven of Maori myth (Aotera means thin white cloud). Ironically, the one strong tree in their yard is where Grace chooses to hang herself. Beth mourns her own dislocation from a rich tradition during a visit to the part of the country where her family comes from. Yet there's a sense that, despite her putting up with Jake's abusive behaviour, she alone never lost touch with the spiritual armoury of her ancestors' warrior past.

Lizzie Francke



Between the lines: Julian Arahanga

Postcards From America

United Kingdom/USA 1994

Director: Steve McLean

Certificate

Not yet issued
Distributor
ICA Projects
Production Company
Islet
In association with
Channel Four Films
Presents
A Normal Production

Executive Producer

Mark Nash

Producers

Craig Paull
Christine Vachon

Co-producer

Steve McLean

Associate Producers

Philip Yenawine
Olivier Renaud-Clement
Joel Hinman
Pamela Koffler

Production Manager

John Bruce
Unit Production Manager
V. S. Brodie

Location Managers

Mark Taylor
Julie Wolcott

Assistant Directors

Elizabeth Gill
Chris Hoover
Yasmeen Hoosenally
Derrick Karaos
Shawn Haynes

Casting

Daniel Haughey
LA:
Jakki Fink

Screenplay

Steve McLean

Script Supervisor

Pamela Koffler
Christine Gee

Director of Photography

Ellen Kuras

Opticals

Rose Troche

Editor

Elizabeth Gazzara
Production Designer
Thérèse Deprez

Art Director

Scott Pask
Costume Design
Sara Slotnick

Make-up/Hair

Tim Dark
Barri Scinto
Mandy Lyons

Title Design

Bureau

Opticals

The Effects House

Music

Stephen Endelman

Music Performed by

Voice:
Jimmy Sommerville

Violin Sythesist:
Richard Sortomme

Guitars:
Bob Rose

Music Supervisor

Randy Poster

Music Editor

Nic Ratner

Sound Editor

Tim O'Shea

Sound Mixers

Neil Danziger
Jan McLaughlin

Cast

James Lyons

Adult David

Michael Tighe

Teenage David

Olmo Tighe

Young David

Michael Imperoli

The Hustler

Michael Ringer

Father

Maggie Low

Mother

John Ventimiglia

David Strickland

Brad Hunt

Jason Emard

Joe Marshall

Jeffrey Steele

The Drivers

Paul Germaine-Brown

Dick Callahan

Dennie Carrig

John Corrigan

Steven Mark Friedman

The 'Johns'

Les 'Linda' Simpson

Trippy

Dean 'Sissy Fit' Novotny

Porn Theatre Drag

Queen

Tom Gilroy

Adult David's Friend

Peter Byrne

St Sebastian

Bob Romano

Art Dealer

Danny and Tony Urbino

The Porn Stars

Patti Dileo

Maureen Goldfeder

Prudence Wright Holmes

Coco McPherson

Suburban Moms

Dona Brangham-Snell

Little Girl

Colin Blair Fisher

Young David's Friend

Rick Bolton

Uncle

Lane Burgess

Aunt

Zachary Asher Katz

Dimitry Stathas

Matthew Kuran

Little Boys

Joyce George

Ideal Mom

Jay Nickerson

Ideal Dad

Jonathan Turner

Lea Gulino

David's Neighbours

Thom Milano

Policeman

Crosby Romberger

David's Brother

Allyson Anne Buckley

David's Sister

Augustus Coertz

Mugged Man

Todd Marsh

Son With Aids

Philip Yenawine

Carol Morgan

Emily Spray

Sam Atkinson

Aids family

8.370feet

93 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

● A man wanders through a desert landscape. His face is dripping with sweat. In a voice-over, he indicates that he is in a state of intense emotional anguish. He screams. Inside his apartment, he washes his face in a sink piled high with dirty dishes and paintbrushes. He announces that there is something inside his body trying to kill him. His name is David and he begins talking through some episodes of his life, roaming back and forth between scenes of him as a boy, as a younger man, and at roughly the age he is now.

Denied the love of his mother, abused by his alcoholic father, the boy David plays in the woods, goes swimming in the lake and fantasises about growing up in a perfect American family. Escaping the suburban nightmare of New Jersey, he hitchhikes to New York, where he lives hand to mouth as a hustler, "looking for the weight of some man to lie across me to replace the non-existent hugs and kisses from my mom and dad." He meets with a variety of men – a married lawyer who sees to it that he gets a good meal; a man who offers him a lift and then rapes him; a supercilious art collector he dreams of murdering; a "rich fag" he and a fellow hustler attempt to mug with a pair of ill-concealed meat-cleavers; two young thugs who drive him into the desert and threaten to shoot him.

Death finally takes hold when David's lover develops Aids, bringing back memories of David's father's suicide. He stumbles around the desert, swearing that if he could only merge his own body with that of his dying lover, he would.

● When the artist and writer David Wojnarowicz died of an Aids-related illness in July 1992, he had become a kind of American legend. His paintings, photography, installations and one-man performances made him the talk of New York's East Village art scene. But it was his two semi-autobiographical books, *Close To The Knives* and *Memories That Smell Like Gasoline*, which brought him to the attention of a much wider audience, and prompted at least one critic to label him the Jack Kerouac of the Aids generation.

In the first (subtitled *A Memoir of Disintegration*), Wojnarowicz offers a scathing account of what it means to grow up queer in America – raging against homophobia, government indifference to the Aids crisis and "the sense of death in the American landscape". In the second, he provides a moving testament to the longing for love and sexual contact in the shadow of the epidemic.

Steve McLean's visually arresting first feature draws heavily on these books for its narrative content and fragmentary structure. From a series of jumbled snapshots of David's life as an abused child, a homeless hustler and a grieving lover, we gradually piece together a portrait of a man desperately at odds with the world. "Sometimes it gets dark in here, behind these eyes", the adult David tells us at the start, and the ►

◀ film is an attempt to take us deep into the heart of his interior darkness.

From the blinking opening titles to the last formalised flashback to David's violent childhood, McLean employs a range of technical devices which succeed in conveying the necessary sense of dislocation, but run the risk of obscuring all points of identification beyond a personal one between the director and author. In this regard, David's mother talking directly to camera about how her husband "beat my little boy with a chain" evokes far greater sympathy than an elegantly choreographed scene in which the father is shown silently beating the child in a stylised 50s living room.

The frantic jump-cutting and choice of imagery (a boy curled up in a bird's nest, a bully transmogrified into Saint Sebastian) suggest a significant debt to Derek Jarman, while the scenes where the camera roves around the family home are reminiscent of Terence Davies. But the biggest influences are young and American. Co-produced by Christine Vachon (producer on Todd Haynes' *Poison* and Tom Kalin's *Swoon*), and featuring Jim Lyons (one of the stars of *Poison*) as the adult David, *Postcards From America* looks like a tailor-made application to the New Queer Cinema Club.

The vital components are all there – the flagrant disregard for so-called positive images, the romantic sense of outsiderdom, the love of the road and desire for dark-eyed men with dirty thoughts and feelings. But while these aspects of McLean's film are an undeniable source of pleasure, they don't necessarily serve the material well. Wojnarowicz's reputation as a queer outlaw was shaped by his own HIV status and acute awareness of how "death comes in small doses". And while *Postcards* certainly beats the designer nihilism of a film as self-consciously 'queer' as Gregg Araki's *The Living End*, it never matches the emotional intensity of a more linear Aids narrative such as *Savage Nights*.

Postcards ends, where it began, in the desert. In a sense, it's the same desert Cyril Collard found himself in at the end of *Savage Nights* – only there is no suggestion of transcendence. Nor, strangely, is there much sense of the raw anger which drove Wojnarowicz to explore such desolate territory. In a chapter of *Close To The Knives* entitled 'Postcards From America: X Rays From Hell', he wrote that, "my rage is really about the fact that when I was told that I'd contracted this virus it didn't take me long to realise that I'd contracted a diseased society as well".

For all its visual flair, McLean's film focuses on the disease of the body without really reflecting on the society responsible for it. When David's hustler friend remarks that "America is such a beautiful place, isn't it?", you can't tell whether he is being ironic or not. Watching *Postcards From America* won't make you wish you were here, but neither will it start you wondering about where that "here" is.

Paul Burston

Trapped in Paradise

USA 1994

Director: George Gallo

Certificate

PG

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

Executive Producer

David Permut

Producers

Jon Davison

George Gallo

Co-producers

Ellen Erwin

David Coatsworth

Production Co-ordinator

Whitney K. Brown

Unit Production Manager

David Coatsworth

Location Managers

Keith Large

2nd Unit:

Howard Rothschild

2nd Unit Director

Glenn R. Wilder

Assistant Directors

Walter Gasparovic

Grant Lucibello

Penny Charter

Andrew Shea

Michael Johnson

Casting

Donna Isaacson

Toronto:

Ross Clydesdale

Associates:

Laura Adler

Christine Sheaks

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

George Gallo

Script Supervisors

Elaine Yarish

2nd Unit:

Kerry Spurrill

Director of Photography

Jack N. Green

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Harald Ortenburger

Camera Operators

Jon Cassar

Neil Seale

Editor

Terry Rawlings

Production Designer

Bob Ziemicki

Art Director

Gregory P. Keen

Set Decorator

Gord Sim

Set Dressers

Richard Ferbrache

Gord Deyell

Scenic Artist

Matthew Lammerich

Special Effects Supervisor

Martin Malivoire

Special Effects

Crew Chief:

Ted Ross

2nd Unit:

Bob Hall

Costume Design

Mary E. McLeod

Wardrobe Supervisor

Francine Tanguay

Make-up

Peter Montagna

Donald Mowat

Allen Weisinger

Marlene Schneider

Hairstylists

Joseph Coscia

Paul Elliot

Bill Farley

Paula Fleet

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music/Conductor/Orchestra

ations

Robert Folk

Music Supervisor

Peter Afterman

Supervising Music Editor

J. J. George

Songs

"You Make Me Feel

So Young" by Mack

Gordon, Josef Myrow;

"Do You Hear What

I Hear" by Gloria

Shayne, Noel Regney,

performed by Bing

Crosby; "Up on the

Housetop" by Eddy

Arnold; "You're Nobody

Till Somebody Loves

You" by James

Cavanaugh, Larry

Stock, Russ Morgan,

performed by Dean

Martin; "Danke

Schoen" by Bert

Kaempfert, Kurt

Schwabach, Milt

Gabler; "Y.M.C.A." by

Jackques Morali, Henri

Belolo, Victor Willis

Supervising Sound Editor

Gary S. Gerlich

Dialogue Editors

Teri E. Dorman

Scott Hecker

David Arnold

Supervising ADR Editors

Robert G. Ulrich

William C. Carruth

ADR Editors

Richard Friedman

James R. Simcik

David Spence

Foley Editors

David L. Horton

Scott A. Tinsley

Sound Mixers

Bruce Carwardine

Music:

Armin Steiner

Foley Mixer

David Gertz

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Sergio Reyes

B. Tennyson

Sebastian III

John J. Stephens

Sound Effects Editors

William Jacobs

Elliot L. Koretz

Foley Artists

Jim Moriana

Jeff Wilhoit

Stunt Co-ordinators

Glenn R. Wilder

Branko Racki

Film Extract

The Alligator People

(1959)

Cast

Nicolas Cage

Bill Firpo

Richard B. Shull

Father Ritter

Jon Lovitz

Dave Firpo

Mädchen Amick

Sarah Collins

Dana Carvey

Alvin Firpo

Jack Heller

Chief Parole Officer

Mike Steiner

Monty Dealer

Greg Ellwand

Kirk Dunn

Cops

Blanca Jansuzian

Shopkeeper

Florence Stanley

Ma Firpo

Cherie Ewing

Woman in Restaurant

Jeff Levine

Man in Restaurant

Sandra Myers

Frank Berardino

Diners

Mable & Sarge

Merlin

Paul Lazar

Deputy Timmy Burnell

Andrew Miller

Deputy Myers

Sean McCann

Chief Burnell

Gerard Parkes

Father Gorenzel

Donald Moffat

Clifford Anderson

Frank Blanch

Rutag Guard

John Ashton

Ed Dawson

John Bergantine

Clovis Minor

Angela Paton

Hattie Anderson

Vivian Reis

Lila

Bernard Behrens

Doc Milgrom

Bunty Webb

Hertha Weyerhauser

Kay Hawtrey

Rose Weyerhauser

Vic Manni

Vic Mazzucci

Frank Pesce

Caesar Spinoza

Vic Noto

Nicky Pops Anest

Rocco Savastano

George Aggie Anest

Inmates

George Gallo Snr

Don Vito

Al Cerullo

Helicopter Pilot

James W. Evangelatos

Richard McMillan

Robert Thomas

Agents

Richard Jenkins

Shaddus Peyser

Jonathan Allore

Agent Boyle

Mark Melymick

Agent Cooper

Scott Wickware

Agent Giardello

Sean O'Bryan

Dick Anderson

Zoe Erwin

Marla Anderson

Himself

Tripod

John Dawe

Newsreader

Marcia Bennett

Bus Station Clerk

Brett Miller

State Trooper

Pierre Larocque

Tom McLeary

Truckers

Bill Currie

Bus Driver

Marco Kyris

Brian Kaulback

David Farant

More People

10,009 feet

111 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Deluxe

Anamorphic

● New York City. Restaurateur Bill Firpo finds a wallet stuffed with money, and pockets it. At confession, he says that he returned it. The Priest tells him that his two crooked brothers, Dave and Alvin, are about to be released from jail. Warily, Bill picks them up and on the way home, the kleptomaniac Alvin begs to be let out at a candy store, where he tries to rob the till. Having tried to stuff the money back, the horrified Bill is forced to join his brothers in a getaway from the police. Back home, the acerbic Ma Firpo is reduced to tears by a letter that Dave and Alvin have brought from prison, begging them to visit an inmate's daughter named Sarah in the small town of Paradise. Initially, Bill is dismissive, but when he hears that the

wallet has been found at the candy store, he agrees to drive to Paradise.

They arrive on Christmas Eve finding Sarah at the poorly guarded local bank in Paradise. When a huge supply of money is brought in, Bill is tempted, especially when his brothers reveal that they have guns in the car. Donning masks, they rob the bank, and make their inept escape. Back at the jail, feared criminal Vic Mazzucci is bragging of his perfect plan to rob the Paradise bank when news of the robbery interrupts him.

seen *29th Street* is, according to its producer "in the tradition of Frank Capra". But for most of its length, *Trapped in Paradise* is as far from Capra's harsh sentiment as it is from Gallo's previously droll humour. We first see Paradise as a model enclosed in a paperweight, and this image of suspension proves apt. The real Paradise is picture-postcard perfect, its niceness unrelenting, badness beyond its ken. There's a Stephen King story in which a couple, happening upon a similar wonderful town, freeze in horror at its unnaturalness. Such a suspicion has become deep-rooted in cinema ever since David Lynch's small town exposé, *Blue Velvet*. But Gallo intends no such subversion. Refuting these fashionable archetypes, *Trapped in Paradise* has a different sort of oddness. Partly based on Gallo's own birthplace, Paradise is a distillation of genuine small town goodness. The wasted presence of Lynch veterans Nicolas Cage and Mädchen Amick only emphasises this perverse return to wholesomeness. Remarkable as it sounds, this is a comic confection built on faith in human nature alone.

Sadly, its just this earnest quality which causes the film often to be very bad indeed. Comparison with Gallo's earlier work suggests that faith has undermined his comic talent. *Midnight Run* had old-fashioned screwball comic discipline, its sentimentality rigorously tempered by wit and tension. *Trapped in Paradise* by contrast, sides so unquestioningly with small town values that the possibility of tension never arises. The communal innocence which allows the Firpo brothers to rob Paradise blind is never contrasted with the virtues of intelligence or imagination. The Fippos themselves are merely childish, never cynical enough to test Paradise's mettle, fitting easily into a town which appears to be a haven for the mentally subnormal. The soft-headedness of the whole project is summed up by Donald Moffat's straight-faced revelation that the stolen bank money is the town's Christmas savings. This rivals *Gremlins'* infamous monologue on the death of Santa Claus for sentimental dementia.

Indulging his own screenplay to an untenable extent, Gallo abandons any sense of perspective. Given the slightness of the plot, the two-and-a-half hour running time is clearly ill-considered. There are some very funny lines ("You're dumber than a boxful of hair"), but these are never far from stretches of utter mediocrity. *Trouble in Paradise* veers widely in pitch and quality, stumbling between the blandness of its subject and the occasional wit of its writer. Cage sums up this uncertainty best, mugging, muttering and shouting a performance of almost wasted effort. It's left to Dana Carvey to add a little grace. His one-note, sweet impressions of imbecility has the simple confidence of Hollywood comedy at its most innocent and effective. It's exactly the old-fashioned tone which Gallo must have wished for, but misses by a country mile.

Nick Hasted

Wagons East!

USA1994

Director: Peter Markle

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

An Outlaw production

In association with

Goodman/Rosen

productions

Executive Producer

Lynwood Spinks

Producers

Gary Goodman

Barry Rosen

Robert Newmyer

Jeffrey Silver

Co-producer

Jim Davidson

Production Co-ordinators

Andrew Loo

LA:

Michael Zieper

Production Manager

Ted Parvin

Unit Managers

Alejandro Ferrer P.

Felipe Marino T.

Location Manager

Alberto Tejada A.

Post-production Supervisor

Juanita Diana

Assistant Directors

Gary Marcus

Mario Cirano

Cisneros T.

Casting

Richard Pagano

Sharon Bialy

Debi Manwiller

Tory Herald

Screenplay

Matthew Carlson

Story

Jerry Abrahamson

Script Supervisors

Dawn Dreiling

2nd Unit:

Joyce "Doc" Pepper

Director of Photography

Frank Tidy

2nd Unit Directors

of Photography

Angel Goded

Henner Hoffman

Optical Camera

Richard Cohen

Stanley Miller

Camera Operators

Joel Ransom

Brian Glover

Sean Doyle

Digital Effects

Todd-Ao Digital Images

Supervisors:

Brian Jennings

Brad Kuehn

Producer:

Ilad Mamikunian

Co-ordinator:

Gil Gagnon

Artists:

Laurie George

Kevin Lingensfelder

Opticals

Howard A. Anderson

Company

Co-ordinators:

Gary Crandall

Jeff Hutchison

Line-up Supervisor:

Michael L. Griffin

Matte Artist

Jesse Silver

Animation

Sean Schur

Editor

Scott Conrad

Production Designer

Vince J. Cresciman

Art Director

Hector Romero C.

Set Design

Miguel Angel

Gonzalez B.

Set Decorator

Enrique Estevez L.

Storyboard Artist

Tim Burgard

Sculptures

Antonio Gomez M.

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Jesus "Chu Chu"

Duran G.

Costume Design

Adolfo "Fito" Ramirez

Wardrobe Supervisor

Enrique Villavicencio R.

Make-up Artists

Jack Petty

Humberto Escamilla Z.

Hairstylists

Lynn Del Kail

Silvia Fernandez P.

Title Design

Pittard Sullivan

Fitzgerald

Titles

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Michael Small

Music Performed by

Irish Film Orchestra

Music Conductor

Michael Small

Orchestrations

Chris Dedrick

Music Supervisor

Harry Shannon

Music Editor

Bunny Andrews

Sound Design/

Supervising Sound Editors

Emile Razpopov

Dessie Markovsky

Sound Editors

Edmund Lachman

Tom Scurry

William Hooper

Glenn Auchinachie

Brent Winter

William Schlueter

Greg Conway

Bobbi Banks

Tim Kirk

Vesco Razpopov

Production Sound Mixer

Pud Cusak

Music Mixer

Andrew Bolland

ADMixers

Pete Elia

Jeff Gomillion

Foley Mixer

Tommy Goodman

Dolby stereo

consultant:

Douglas Greenfield

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Chris Carpenter

John J. Stephens

Bill W. Benton

Foley Artists

Joan Rowe

Sean Rowe

ADR Co-ordinator

Burton Sharp

Stunt Co-ordinator

Bud Davis

Head Wrangler

Jose Ma. "Chico"

Hernandez Haro

Cast

John Candy

James Harlow

Richard Lewis

Phil Taylor

John C. McGinley

Julian

Ellen Greene

Belle

Robert Picardo

Ben Wheeler

Ed Lauter

John Slade

William Sanderson

Zeke

Rodney A. Grant

Little Feather

Melinda Culea

Constance Taylor

Joe Bays

River Townsman

Abe Benrubi

Abe Ferguson



Uncle buckskin: John Candy

Jill Boyd
Prudence Taylor
Douglas Carlson
Bar Patron
Ryan Cutrona
Tom
Ricky Damazio
Smith
Bud Davis
Desperado Leader
Bill Daydodge
Elder
Thomas F. Duffy
Clayton Ferguson
David Dunard
Harry Bob Ferguson
Steve Eastin
Bartender
Roger Eschbacher
Reporter
Stuart Grant
White Cloud
Randy Hall
Pony Express Rider
Chad Hamilton
Ricky Jones
Don Lake
Lieutenant Bailey
Marvin McIntyre
Irving Ferguson
Robin McKee
Lindsey
Joel McKinnon Miller
Zack Ferguson

Mauricio Martinez
Denver Mattson
Card Players
Russell Means
Chief
Lochlyn Munro
Billy
Ingrid Nuernberg
Henrietta Wheeler
Patrick Thomas O'Brien
Stranger
Ethan Phillips
Smedly
Jimmy Ray Pickens
Scout
Tony Pierce
Junior Ferguson
Charles Rocket
Larchmont
Derek Sanft
Jeremiah Taylor
Marcie Smolin
Woman on Trail
William Tucker
Reporter
Martin Wells
Taylor

9,641 feet
107 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

Several disgruntled citizens in the Western town of Prosperity band together and decide to head back East. Farmer Phil Taylor is tired of having his cattle rustled; banker Ben Wheeler is sick of his bank being robbed; saloon girl Belle is annoyed at getting IOUs instead of cash; newly arrived mail order bride Lindsey is dismayed to discover that she's been bought jointly by the oafish Ferguson brothers to share between them; and the final straw for bookseller Julian is when one would-be customer wants to buy a book to use as toilet paper. The party hire the disgraced, permanently drunken wagon master James Harlow to lead them. Joined by the Fergusons, failed prospector Zeke and young cowboy Billy, the group soon attract several other wagons and this growth into a popular movement attracts the attention of

greedy railroad tycoon J. P. Moreland (Gaillard Sartain) who fears that a mass exodus back East will depress land values. Moreland hires ruthless gunslinger John Slade to stop them.

Harlow accidentally leads the group into an Indian camp; the chief agrees to assign some braves as escorts. Slade's attempts to disrupt the migrants' journey, first by breaking their water barrels and then by causing a landslide, aren't successful. When he threatens the group face to face, he's beaten to the draw and shot dead by Julian. Moreland now turns to General Larchmont and his Cavalry to attack the party. 20 years previously Larchmont had requisitioned the supplies of an earlier Harlow wagon train and was thus directly responsible for the cannibalism and subsequent disgrace which ruined the latter's career. Larchmont is sent packing by Harlow and Moreland is killed under a wagon when the group happen upon the land rush he's organised. Julian decides to head back West to San Francisco with an Indian friend and Clayton Ferguson is killed by a meteorite - thus freeing Lindsey for Billy. They and the remainder of the group, still following Harlow, resume their journey East.

Wagons East! is a series of discrete comedy sketches masquerading as a whole film. Just how much of its inadequacy can be ascribed to the death of John Candy in mid-production is a difficult question, although the result suggests much hasty re-jigging to cover for Candy's absence and some manipulation of footage already in the can. The bizarre result is that in an ostensible John Candy comedy vehicle he has only a supporting role. He rides his horse, falls asleep in the saddle and leads the wagon train, but the majority of the physical and verbal comedy is handled by other actors.

◀ In his place the film offers a disjointed series of gags, most of which are reminiscent of earlier and better films. The cartoon-like antics of the villain Jack Slade are an obvious throwback to the Kirk Douglas character in *The Villain*. The inevitable saloon scene in which assorted genteel characters try to order drinks other than whiskey is almost as old as the Western itself. Also in a dishevelled tradition mined to exhaustion by movie and television comedy sketch writers are the uncouth antics of the Ferguson brothers, while the Cavalry attack to the strains of Wagner suggests less a knowing nod to *Apocalypse Now* than a failure to think up something more appropriate to a Western spoof.

That said, there is a germ of a funny film here. The inverted logic of the story is deliciously pessimistic. Here the West isn't a focus for hopes, ambitions and aspirations: instead, it's a place where dreams resolutely don't come true. This is a fertile premise and the story is lightly peppered with effective gags along those lines. Yet the individual pieces fail to add up because the gags are spread too sparingly between the supporting players. Meanwhile the direction and editing trundle along at the same slow pace as the wagons themselves and the film's flat, television style makes its budget limitations all too apparent. John C. McGinley (*On Deadly Ground*, *Watch It*, *A Midnight Clear*) performs a scene stealing charismatic rescue job as the effete Julian, which almost comes off. However, like Candy's, his character is never on screen for long enough and the other leads, stand-up comedian Richard Lewis as Phil and Robert Picardo as the banker Ben, fail to register effectively, defeated by the woefully variable nature of their material.

The reason why the comedy Western is a notoriously difficult form to pull off is mainly because the mainstream Western includes a strong vein of self-parody. Nevertheless, the revisionist premise of *Wagons East!* hits the occasional comic bullseye, when the script wittily foregrounds its modern PC sensibility. Taunted by Jack Slade as a "cissy boy", Julina's rejoinder is "Cissy boy! That's so Dodge City!" Phil's cows have 'Phil's Cows' branded on them and faced with further theft he announces "I'm anti-hand gun". The group are quite happy to call themselves quitters ("This country was founded by quitters, English quitters, German quitters..."); and when attacked by the Cavalry put their wagons in a square rather than the traditional circle. Unfortunately, the conventionality of Candy's character works against this more promising style of comedy. Harlow, the slobbish loser who becomes a winner once he's recognised and overcome his inadequacies, is recognisably similar to earlier Candy characters in *Uncle Buck*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* and *Cool Runnings* but nothing at all like the comprehensively idiotic hero which the story really requires.

Tom Tunney

BRITISH INDEPENDENT

Eden Valley

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Amber Production Team

Certificate

15

Distributor

Amber Films

Production Company

Amber Production

Team

In association with

Channel Four

N.D.R.

Arte

Northern Arts

Producers/

Co-directors/Screenwriters

Amber Production

Team:

Richard Grassick

Ellen Hare

Sirkka Liisa Konttinen

Murray Martin

Pat McCarthy

Lorna Powell

Pete Roberts

Additional Help:

Dave Eadington

Jane Neatrou

Annie Robson

Lynn Silmon

Music

Amber Production

Team

Alastair Robertson

Graham Raine

Dubbing Mixer

Dave Skitton

Cast

Brian Hogg

Hoggy

Darren Bell

Billy

Mike Elliott

Danker

Jimmy Killeen

Probation Officer

Wayne Buck

Kevin Buck

Young Lads

John Middleton

Charlie Hardwick

Katja Roberts

Townies

Mo Harrold

Mother

Art Davies

Boyfriend

Bill Speed

Auctioneer

Amber Styles

Woman in Underpass

Rose Laidler

Brian Laidler

Ricky Laidler

Cliff Yusher

John Thom

Trevor Critchlow

3,420 feet

95 minutes

In colour

16mm

● A woman is mugged by three teenage youths in a deserted inner-city subway. One of the trio, Billy Hogg, is given a suspended prison sentence for stealing drugs from a chemist's shop. He leaves Newcastle, where he lives with his mother and her boyfriend, for a fresh start in the country with his father who left home ten years earlier. His dad, Hoggy, lives in a caravan in County Durham, on the land where he breeds and trains horses for harness races. It is cold, wet and bleak in mid-winter and father and son have little in common. Billy is sullen and withdrawn but, from his initial squeamishness at the gelding of a new horse, his interest in his father's line of business – at first as an onlooker only – slowly grows.

He is introduced to his dad's friends, Rose and Brian Laidler, and to races and training sessions. Hoggy is unaware of Billy's criminal record until his probation officer pays them a visit. In the spring, Billy's mates visit. They raid Hoggy's drink and trash the caravan before passing out. Furious, Hoggy drives Billy back to his mother's place, but a glimpse of his son's environment changes his mind. When they return home, Hoggy gives Billy a colt and the lad grows more and more involved with horses and trotting; eventually he learns to race himself.

Having discovered that the land on which he lives is to be sold off by auction, Hoggy disappears on a drinking spree. Rose tracks him down in a pub and he only just makes it to Billy's crucial court appearance. Hoggy's bid for the land is successful but, in order to pay for it, he agrees with Danker, a well-to-do fixer, to pull a horse at what is to be Billy's first race. Against the

odds, Billy wins the race. Hoggy confesses the deal to a disillusioned Billy but in the meantime Danker has his horse, Diamond, poisoned. Hoggy is forced to shoot the horse but there is some kind of hesitant reconciliation between father and son.

● If pitched at Hollywood, an outline of this film – plenty of animals, a clash between urban moral decay and traditional rural values, with nature emerging triumphantly (and somewhat smugly) on top – could end up either as melodrama, a full-blown oedipal conflict between father and son, or as a kids' movie. *Eden Valley* is none of these. It originates in the North East of England and, in its low key intensity, is entirely consistent with the background and working practices of Amber Films. Set up around 1968 as an independent production company with a remit to document local working class life, Amber's output has been steady if not prolific. Its first full-length feature, *Seacoal* in 1985, marked a change in scale and direction, although the group retains a collective decision-making process, operating with small crews, its own equipment and regional funding. Thus its work is resolutely low budget and they prefer a lengthy gestation period during which the production team lives alongside their subjects, entering into their way of life as far as possible.

The Laidler family, who were featured in *Seacoal* and again play themselves in *Eden Valley*, initiated members of the collective into the pleasures of harness racing and subsequently a drama was constructed around this pursuit. The concept is not far removed from the ideas of Cesare Zavattini, spokesperson for Italian neo-realism, who writes about devising a film around a woman going to a shop to buy a pair of shoes, the fact creating "its

own fiction, in its own particular sense". What is refreshing about *Eden Valley* is that it manages to do this without over-inscribing itself with the marks of authenticity; it does not, for example, attempt to label itself as documentary by means of a self-consciously chaotic style. Nor is there any clear-cut distinction between characters who play themselves and the two main actors. Brian Hogg as Hoggy was acclimatised to his character's way of life over a period of time while Darren Bell (Billy) was brought in fresh and raw from the inner city. The action was shot sequentially so the actors were reacting to circumstances as opposed to simply play-acting the story.

The narrative, however, is meticulously structured around the story of father and son. We see Hoggy and Billy as they see each other, their relations are developed in visual and lyrical terms: the framing of point-of-view shots through rainwashed windows, differentiation between interior and exterior spaces, and, above all, seasonal changes as they affect the landscape. Sounds, from curlew cries to personal stereotypes, reflect the clash between urban and rural cultures; dialogue is restricted to terse exchanges in local dialect. The film also captures some of the excitement of the trotting races themselves, and their idiosyncratic, slightly anachronistic character has its analogy in Hoggy's philosophy about opting out. Though he decries the incongruity of people driving in cars to work in order to pay for those cars, his own value system is called into question by the compromises he is forced to make. The major investment here has been made in terms of time and energy rather than money and the dividend – a self-contained, distinctive film which eschews clichés and sentimentality – pays off.

Jo Comino



Reality bites: Brian Hogg

RE-RELEASE

One Hundred and One Dalmations

USA 1960

Directors: Wolfgang Reitherman/
Hamilton S. Luske / Clyde Geronimi

Certificate

U

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Walt Disney

Producer

Walt Disney

Production Supervisor

Ken Peterson

Screenplay

Bill Peet

Based on the book

The Hundred and One

Dalmatians by Dodie

Smith

Directing Animators

Milt Kahl

Frank Thomas

Marc Davis

John Lounsbery

Eric Larson

Ollie Johnston

Character Styling

Bill Peet

Tom Oreb

Layout Styling

Don Griffith

Erni Nordli

Colin Campbell

Background

Al Dempster

Anthony Rizzo

Ralph Hulett

Bill Layne

Colour Styling

Walt Peregoy

Layout

Basil Davidovich

Joe Hale

McLaren Stewart

Dale Barnhart

Vance Gerry

Ray Aragon

Dick Ung

Sammy June Lanham

Homer Jonas

Victor Haboush

Al Zinnen

Effects Animation

Jack Boyd

Dan MacManus

Ed Parks

Jack Buckley

Character Animation

Hal King

Les Clark

Cliff Nordberg

Blaine Gibson

Eric Cleworth

John Sibley

Art Stevens

Julius Svendsen

Hal Ambro

Ted Berman

Bill Keil

Don Lusk

Dick Lucas

Amby Paliwoda

Special Process

Ub Iwerks

Eustace Lycett

Editors

Donald Halliday

Roy M. Brewer Jnr

Production Designer

Art Director

Ken Anderson

Music

George Burns

Songs:

Mel Leven

Orchestrations

Franklyn Marks

Music Editor

Evelyn Kennedy

Sound Supervisor

Robert O. Cook

Voices

Rod Taylor

Pongo

Betty Lou Gerson

Cruella De Vil/Miss

Birdwell

Cate Bauer

Lisa Daniels

Perdita

Ben Wright

Roger Radcliff

Fred Worlock

Horace

Badun/Inspector

Craven

Lisa Davis

Anita Radcliff

Martha Wentworth

Nanny/Queenie/Lucy

J. Pat O'Malley

Colonel/Jasper Badun

Tudor Owen

Tower

Tom Conway

Quizmaster/Collie

George Pelling

Danny

Thur/Ravenscroft

The Captain

Dave Frankham

Sergeant Tibs

Ramsay Hill

Television

Announcer/Labrador

Queenie Leonard

Princess

Marjorie Bennett

Duchess

Barbara Baird

Rolly

Micky Maga

Patch

Sandra Abbott

Penny

Mimi Gibson

Lucky

Barbara Luddy

Rover

Paul Frees

Dirty Dawson

Lucille Bliss

TV Commercial Singer

Bob Stevens

Max Smith

Sylvia Marriott

Ballas McKennon

Rickie Sorenson

Basil Ruysdael

7,130 feet

79 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Anita's with a passion for fur coats, has the puppies "dognapped" by her nefarious henchmen, Jasper and Horace.

Distraught, Pongo and Perdita are forced to use the "twilight bark", an oral telegraph system for relaying messages amongst the dog world. In deepest Suffolk, the distress call is picked up by a group of farm animals, including Colonel (a sheepdog), Captain (a stallion) and Sergeant Tibs (a tabby cat). They establish that the puppies are being held at the de Vil stately pile, Hell Hall, along with 84 other dalmatians whom Cruella plans to slaughter and skin to make a spotted fur coat. The animals relay their news back to London, and Pongo and Perdita set out to rescue their brood.

After many privations, the parental pooches reconnoitre at Hell Hall with the Suffolk all-animal regiment, and together they spring all 99 puppies. Making their way through the snow with Jasper, Horace, and Cruella in hot pursuit, the pack reach a town where a friendly Labrador finds them a truck bound for London. Pongo and Perdita roll themselves and all their charges in soot to disguise their appearance. They nearly escape unnoticed until a water droplet on a pup's coat washes off the soot. A vertiginous car chase ends in disaster for Cruella and her cohorts, and all 101 dalmatians are reunited with Roger and Anita. Unable to bear parting with any of the dogs, the human 'pets' vow to establish a dalmatian plantation, to be financed by Roger's new song, a satirical swipe at Cruella which has become a big hit.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected president, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was cleared of obscenity charges, blacklisting ended in Hollywood, Gary Lineker was born, and *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* was released. Clearly, it was a momentous year, and though this last fact is probably less than foundation-shaking in terms of world history, it must be recognised that it formed a significant landmark in the history of Hollywood animation and the annals of the Walt Disney studio.

Freely adapted from Dodie Smith's novel, modestly budgeted and remarkably successful at the box office (a welcome result for the studio after the flop *Sleeping Beauty*), *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* was a truly transitional object, weaning the studio off its cautious commitment to classic storylines and traditional animation methods. Although the equally caninecentric *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) was also set (barely) in the twentieth century, *Dalmatians* was bang up-to-the-minute, going so far as to feature a beatnik abstract expressionist amongst its minor characters. Indeed, right from the credits, the overall design of the film is insistently two dimensional, as if the artists had been moonlighting at exhibitions of Rothko. The backgrounds consist of bold colour fields freely traced with rough, energetic outlines. The palette, generally muted and dunnish to suit the English locale, erupts a volcanic tide of incandescent



Family viewing: Pongo and pups

fuschia and scarlet whenever Cruella de Vil struts across the screen.

In part, this new look was a response to the increasingly popular graphic style at the UPA studios, but probably more decisive was the introduction of a modified photocopying technology that allowed animators to transfer sketches straight onto cels, producing a more spontaneous, friable line in the characters. More pragmatically, photocopying eased the onerous task of putting spots on all those puppies. (The film reputedly contains 6,469,952 spots. How relieved they must have been when the pack were rolled in soot!) Walt Disney himself, whose aesthetic sensibilities inclined more to obsessive neatness and photorealism, didn't like the film much and thereafter took more of a back seat supervisory role in animation production. Thus, just as the metastasising use of photocopying was to transform the industry at large, so the film marked a far-reaching power shift in the structure of the Disney company itself.

Undoubtedly one of the studio's most endearing and enduring films, *Dalmatians* is as witty and fresh today as it was 25 years ago. No dog-lover could fail to be won over by its good temperament and affectionate nature. Prospective owners ought to be aware, however, that it also hides secret fangs, having one of the most frightening climaxes of any Disney film. Aged five, I almost wet myself when Cruella's deranged, goggle-eyed face zoomed towards me just before she prangs her classic car. A Venusian in furs with a proto-punk hairdo, stubbing her pink cigarettes out in drippy Anita's cupcakes, Cruella

is matchless in malignancy, a hate figure for animal libbers – more evil even than William Waldegrave. Betty Lou Gerson gives her a wickedly shrill voice that could strip nail polish at 50 paces. Visually modelled in part on Talulah Bankhead, she upstages all before her, which is just as well for British audiences since the atrocious Cockney accents of those around her anticipate the nadir later reached by Dick Van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*.

Nevertheless, the all-barking tail-wagging bulk of the cast hold their own. Cruella apart, the eponymous heroes of the picture are more vividly realised than their human 'pets' who are all visually stylised, appropriately enough, to bring them into line with their 'owners', the dogs. This is foregrounded especially in the beginning when Pongo surveys a parade of women and their dogs, each pair a matching set in 'dress' and manner. Likewise, the Pongo family, sitting together watching television (*Thunderbolt the Wonderdog*, a clever pastiche of Lassie and Rin Tin Tin), mirror the ideal of domestic big-family bliss current in 1960. Often in films, dogs are not just man's best, but his better friend, more altruistic and noble than the base creatures which constitute mankind, a position revised in the just released *Far From Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog*. There's nothing especially original in the way *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* elaborates this point; it's just that it does it more elegantly than all the pious Lassie-films put together. Not all dog movies go to heaven, but this one is assured its place in the pantheon.

Leslie Felperin

London, the 50s. Pongo, a male dalmatian, pairs his 'pet', a bachelor composer named Roger, with Anita, who is 'owned' by dalmatian bitch Perdita. Both the human and canine couples plight their troth, and soon Perdita gives birth to 15 puppies. After the family has settled into a happy domestic routine, the rapacious Cruella de Vil, an old schoolfriend of

VIDEO RELEASE

Jimmy Hollywood

USA 1994

Director: Barry Levinson

Certificate

15

Distributor

CIC Video

Production Company

Baltimore Pictures

Executive Producer

Peter Giuliano

Producers

Mark Johnson

Barry Levinson

Associate Producers

Marie Rowe

James Flamberg

Gerrit van der Meer

Production Supervisor

Amy Solan

Production Co-ordinator

Nancy G. Kaplan

Unit Production Manager

Gerrit van der Meer

Location Manager

Antoinette Levine

Post-production Supervisor

Lori Jo Nemhauser

Assistant Directors

Peter Giuliano

Kate Davey

Sheryl Blanc

Casting

Louis Di Giiamo

Screenplay

Barry Levinson

Script Supervisor

Julia Pitkanen

Director of Photography

Peter Sova

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Eric D. Anderson

Camera Operator

Kirk R. Gardner

Special Visual Effects Supervisor

John Hesa

Editor

Jay Rabinowitz

Production Designer

Linda DeScenna

Set Decorator

Rick McElvin

Costume Design

Kirsten Everberg

Costume Supervisors

Oda Groeschel

Sarah A. Shaw

Margo Baxley

Make-up

Cheri Minns

Hairstylist

Stephen F. Robinette

Title Design

Charles McDonald

Titles/Opticals

Howard A.

Anderson Co.

Music

Robbie Robertson

Additional:

Howard Drossin

Paul Hoge

Dave Lank

Darren Hickler

Peter Klines

Roache Carruthers

Music Consultant

Joshua Winget

Music Scoring Consultant

Pat McCarthy

Associate Music Producer

Bill Dillon

Music Supervisor

Allan Mason

Music Co-ordinator

Jared Levine

Songs/Music Extracts

"Soap Box Preacher",

"Slo Burn", "Breakin'

The Rules", "Bad

Intentions" by and,

performed by Robbie

Robertson; "Spanish

Theme", "The Far,

Lonely Cry of Trains"

by Robbie Robertson,

performed by Robbie

Robertson, Ryuichi

Sakamoto; "What

About Now" by

Robbie Robertson,

Ivan Neville, performed

by Robbie Robertson;

"Es Que Va Llover",

"El Canalete",

"Guindame La

Hamaca", "El Sol

De Mi Tierra", "Cafe

Casino" by and

performed by Pepe

di Rivero; "Fortune

Teller" by Naomi

Neville, performed

by The Iguanas;

"Hollywood" by Dallas

Austin, Tracey Lewis,

performed by George

Clinton; "Get It Right

Next Time" by and

performed by Gerry

Rafferty; "Le Bien, Le

Mal" by Keith Elan,

MC Solar, Jimmy Jay,

performed by Guru

featuring MC Solar;

"I've Got the World

on a String" by Harold

Arlen, Ted Koehler,

performed by Tony

Bennett; "Mi Tierra"

by Estefano, performed

by Gloria Estefan;

"Mexican Moon" by

Johnette Napolitano,

performed by Concrete

Blonde; "Fever" by

Robert Birch, Nicholas

Hallam, performed by

Stereos MC's; "Lost At

Birth" by Carlton

Ridenhour, Gary

Rinaldo, Hank

Shocklee, performed

Public Enemy;

"Cantaloup" by

Rahsaan Kelly, Geoff

Wilkinson, Mel

Simpson, Herbie

Hancock, performed

by US3; "The Godfather

Waltz" by Nino Rota;

"Let The Good Times

Roll" by Sam Theard,

Fleecie Moore,

performed by Robbie

Robertson, Cassandra

Wilson; "Main Title

from 'Hollywood and

the Stars" theme" by

Elmer Bernstein;

"Musical Excerpts from

'Hollywood and the

Stars" by Elmer

Bernstein, Ruby Raksin,

William Loose, Jack

Cookerly, Emil Caokin

Sound Design

Harry Cohen

Supervising Sound Editor

Marc Fishman

Supervising ADR Editor

Michele Perrone

ADR Editor

Cathie Speakman

Dialogue Editors

Jim Brookshire

Terry F. Yalko

Sound Mixer

Steve Centamessa

Re-recording Mixer

Ken Teaney

Bill Fresh

Tony Sereno

Sound Effects Editors

Tim Gedomer

Anne Schibelli

David Farmer

Sound Effects Co-ordinator

John E. Gray

Foley Artists

Greg Barbanell

Vince Nicastro

Stunt Co-ordinator

Billy Lucas

Cast

Joe Pesci

Jimmy Alto

Christian Slater

William

Victoria Abril

Lorraine de la Pena

Jason Beghe

John Cothran Jr

Detectives

Hal Fishman

Jerry Dunphy

Andrea Kutyas

Anchor People

Kerry Kilbride

Paula Lopez

Paul Jean Jackson

Joe Avellar

Susan Campos

Claudia Naro

Audrey Morgan

Arthel Neville

Scott Weston

Newscasters

Robert La Sardo

Robber

Richard Hind

Angry Driver

Marcus Giamatti

BMW Preppy

Ralph Tabakin

Fan in Hospital

Blanche Rubin

Autograph Woman

Lopez

Spanish Fan

Cynthia Steele

Waitress in Coffee Shop

Helen Brown

Elderly Woman in Deli

James Pickens Jr

Cook

Lon Cutell

Meyerhoff

Vinnie Argiro

Andrew Bilgore

Lisa Passero

Richard McGregor

People in Deli

Thomas Rosales Jr

Chuck Zito

Tough Guys

Earl Billings

Police Captain

Sterling Farris Jr

Drug Dealer

Chris Stacey

Car Radio Thief

Kathy H. Hartsell

Beautician

Joe Kurodo

Festiva Driver

Rob Weiss

Himself

Chad McQueen

Audition Partner

RobbiChong

Casting Secretary

Adrian Nicard

Receptionist

Jill Holden

Receptionist in Life

Story

Harrison Ford

Himself

Barry Levinson

Director of Life Story

Reginald Ballard

Ernie Banks

Janet Denti

Cu Ba Nguyen

Billy Salsberg

Monica Welton

People in the Street

Leslie Darwin

Screaming Lady

Terri Ivans

Holly

PatAsanti

Store Owner

10,080 feet

112 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

De Luxe

Jimmy Alto, a movie-obsessed aspiring actor, is making no headway in Hollywood, in spite of a bus shelter ad for himself that he's financed from the bank account of his girlfriend, Spanish hairdresser Lorraine de la Pena. Jimmy spends most of his time recounting movie lore to his friend William, a possibly brain-damaged young man, and occasionally has disastrous stabs at working, such as a spell in a diner. When Jimmy's car radio is stolen, he and William decide to videotape the thief at work. They apprehend him with a blank loaded pistol, and leave him tied up outside a police station, with a note signed 'S.O.S.' - which the police take to be the name of a vigilante organisation.

After the felon is released, Jimmy sends the police a tape of himself, in the guise of vigilante leader 'Jericho'. He auditions for director Rob Weiss, and is offered a lead role in his new film; but promptly loses it by the next fax. Jimmy and William have a face-off with some drug dealers in which one is shot; consequently, the S.O.S. gets major television coverage, and Jericho becomes a folk hero. Jimmy sets his car on fire to evade police detection, and he and William are now obliged to commandeer cars for their activities. Upset, Lorraine moves out to stay with a friend. Jimmy and William visit a shop that is a front for stolen radio dealing; they subsequently torch it. Then they kidnap a hood and hold him captive in Jimmy's apartment.

Jimmy is visited by cops investigating Jericho's activities. He and William evade a police tail but later their car is rammed, apparently by the kidnapped

hood. Planning to go out with a bang, Jimmy decides to go public and records a last tape, as himself, at a deserted Hollywood Bowl. The next day, William goes for a brain scan at hospital; arriving to meet him, Jimmy is congratulated by Jericho fans who have seen his final tape on television. Leaving the hospital, Jimmy and William are pursued by cops; they hide out in the deserted Egyptian Theatre, while police, media and crowds swarm outside. Despite Lorraine's pleas, Jimmy is intent on giving Jericho one last stand. He dreams of going out in a blaze of glory, and getting mown down by gunfire. He leaves, firing his guns wildly, but the police - warned by Lorraine that he's only firing blanks - don't shoot. Jimmy serves six months in prison, after which his life story is filmed with Harrison Ford in the starring role.

Joe Pesci sticks out in *Jimmy Hollywood* like a sore thumb. But then this is a sore thumb of a film, minor-key but determinedly against the grain (unsurprisingly a US box-office flop, it has gone straight to video in Britain). Engagingly high-concept as its premise is, the film might not have held together so well if not for Pesci's presence, but that he's present at all never stops being slightly troublesome. Pesci is right in the role precisely by virtue of being so wrong for it. With his quasy-psychopathic character and platinum parakeet hair (Pesci's most nightmarish coiffure since J.F.K.), Jimmy seems like a part that Barry Levinson might conceivably have devised with someone more conventionally feisty in mind (Kevin Bacon, say) before opting for the flamboyantly pugnacious Pesci.

Pesci's strength is that he defies belief; Jimmy's essence is that he's entirely implausible in any role other than himself. No one else believes that he's an "Actor Extraordinaire", as his self-financed ad professes. Yet, in an unexpected way, he's right, he is extraordinary, and it's only when adopting his most extraordinary role, giving vent to his own suppressed rage, that he redeems his own need to be someone else. Jimmy is the last word in Method playing: all motivation and no role. He's forgotten his own persona, and gets caught up in great moments from the repertoires of Bogart, Cagney and above all John Garfield. As a diner waiter, he doesn't convince for a second, but as Jericho, a shady construct more or less foisted on him by the media, he finds the role that fits. Thus Jimmy's 'tragic' moment actually comes as a blessed relief - the realisation that he's no Brando, but strictly a one-role player.

Jimmy Hollywood is an oddball, entirely personal Barry Levinson project. The intimate, downbeat feel, the improvised rhythms of the dialogue and the agreeably casual editing style look back to Levinson's finest hour *Diner* (there's also a nod to *Tin Men* in an aside telling us that Jimmy was once an aluminium siding salesman). Its thoroughgoing demystification of the

Tinseltown myth is far more cutting than *The Player* because it's set entirely at street level. The claustrophobic small-time perspective eschews the panoramic scope of life seen from Errol Flynn's eyrie (which Jimmy and Lorraine visit for a night of disillusioned nostalgia) and it may explain the film's box-office failure.

Instead Levinson's cruising camera scans the homeless, junkies, hustlers and rubbernecks on the sleazy, tourist-class Hollywood Boulevard. In the opening sequence, Jimmy recites by memory all the star names embedded in the pavement. It is a world in which the old dreams of Hollywood Lotoland are long dead. The real action has left the silver screen to be entombed in the mausoleum-like Egyptian Theatre, preserved in the aspic of the 'Hollywood of the Stars' tape that Jimmy obsessively watches on his Sony Watchman. Instead it's taken up residence in a plethora of television news channels and ironically, it's those that finally make Jimmy a star.

The need to pump *Jimmy Hollywood* up into more conventional entertainment means that Levinson at points saddles his film with incongruously flashy action sequences. The premise doesn't entirely hold, either: it's hard to buy these dopey loafers as die-hard vigilantes, unless you believe that Jimmy's dreams of tough-guy stardom have actually driven him crazy. Certainly, some of his behaviour - kidnapping, getting into gunfights, even arson - verges on the psychopathic. Acclaimed as a hero, he's also a poor man's Travis Bickle, and not even king of the streets (much of the time, he's reduced to riding LA's unreliable bus system).

But Pesci's indefatigable, tic-driven performance powers the film wonderfully, and he's matched to eccentric effect by Christian Slater and Victoria Abril. The very sight of Slater underplaying is miraculous indeed, and his William, a Stan Laurel so passive he's barely there, is the perfect foil for Jimmy. Abril rises brilliantly both to the screwball tone and to the alien rhythms of Hollywood English - she maintains her Madrid accent and inflections so strong that many of her exchanges with Pesci come across as non sequiturs, making their relationship seem all the more intimate.

Jimmy Hollywood is certainly flawed by the imbalance between verbal routines and action-comedy hi-jinks. It's also let down by Robbie Robertson's lugubrious songs. But any traces of solemnity are offset by a prevailing sense of cheek. There's a cut-price touch of *The Player* in the use of real-life tyro director Rob Weiss (*Amongst Friends*) as the man who gives Jimmy a part. When the "historic" audition is restaged with a worried-looking Harrison Ford, the director is Levinson himself. In fact, in his audition with Weiss, Jimmy turns out against the odds to be a brilliant improviser after all, which suggests that he is wasting his time on the Strip when he probably has a natural home back East with the Wooster Group.

Jonathan Romney

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VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE

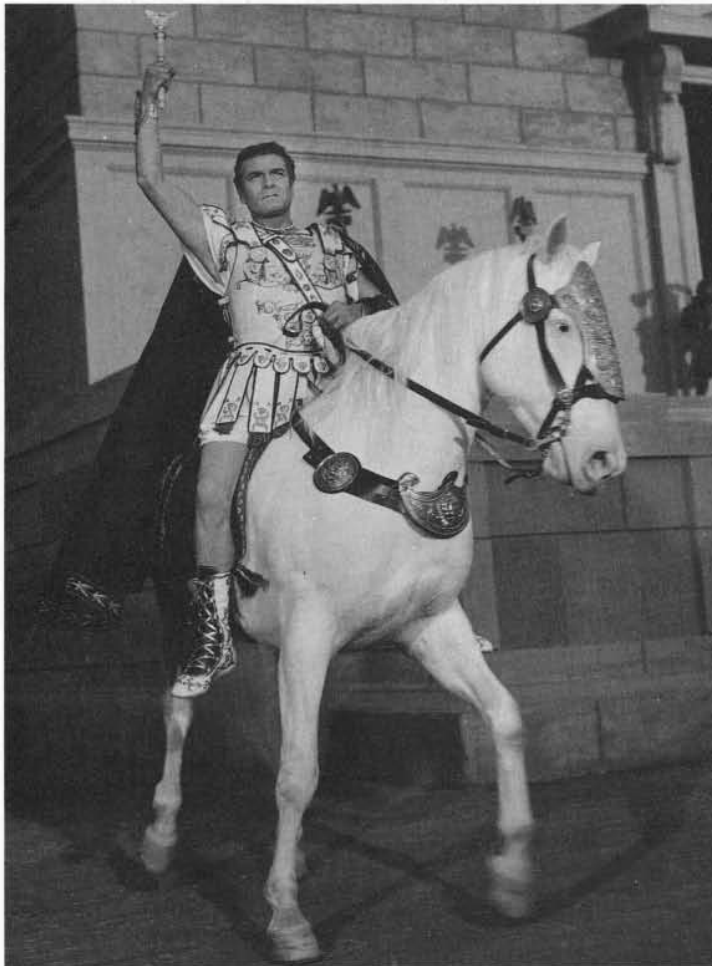
Spartacus

Director Stanley Kubrick/USA 1960

Struck from a superb quality print which shows off the glorious Super Technirama-70 format, this star-studded historical epic has the cut homosexual scenes between Laurence Olivier and Tony Curtis restored. Kubrick took over the reigns after Anthony Mann was fired from the film after only eight days. Although

Kubrick had to contend with cumbersome camera equipment, the movie's beauty is expressed through its *mise-en-scène*, deep focus and sumptuous art direction. In 73 BC, a slave rebellion led by Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) rallies against the tyrannical General Crassus (Laurence Olivier). (MFB No. 607)

● Retail: Universal VHR 1860; Price £10.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG



Rule of the sword: Laurence Olivier

Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y chocolate)

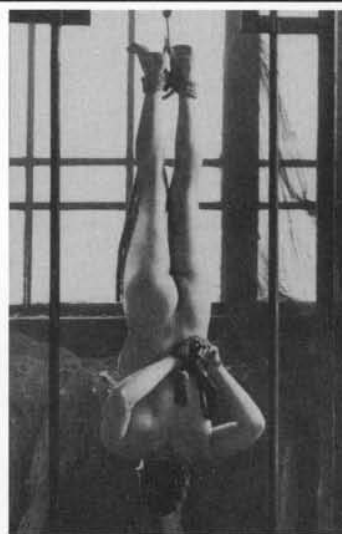
Directors Tomás Gutiérrez Alea/Juan Carlos Tabío/Cuba 1993

A young politico, David (Vladimir Cruz), while studying at Havana University strikes up a close friendship with a flamboyant homosexual called Diego (Jorge Perugorria). Diego's international lifestyle, which includes black-market Johnnie Walker whiskey, English poetry and Maria Callas albums, captivates the young David. The weak narrative device which involves the steadfastly straight David coming back to his gay friend even in the face of advances by his ex-girlfriend, is offset by the wonderful and frequently intimate acting by the two central leads which raises this above a simplistic tirade against a homophobic regime. (S&S December 1994)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1187; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18



Conflict in Havana: Vladimir Cruz



Hanging out for blood

Cronos

Director Guillermo del Toro/Mexico 1992

While the current vampire vogue is now spiralling towards a protracted *danse macabre*, Guillermo del Toro's blood-sucking first feature still offers plenty of bite. Its gimmick lies in the 'Cronos Device', a deliciously perverse, sixteenth-century contraption of cogs, gears and whirring flywheels, in which a trapped vampiric insect waits. When ageing antique dealer Jesús Gris (Federico Luppi) is stung, his new lust for life gives him a thirst for blood and makes him the focus for the brutal attentions of a dying millionaire (Claudio Brook). For all its beautiful design and stylish *mise-en-scène*, the uniqueness of del Toro's lively and imaginative generic reinvention is its replacement of fashionable eroticism with good old-fashioned blood hunger. In the most repulsively striking scene, a famished Jesús drools over a toilet patron's nosebleed, before licking clean the white-tiled floor. This isn't about sex, but hunger, and is all the better for it. Seconds, anyone? (S&S October 1994)

● Rental: Tartan Video TVT 1209; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Menace II Society

Directors The Hughes Brothers/USA 1993

In the opening moments of this bitter depiction of life in Watts, LA, a young black kid casually shoots a Korean store-owner and his wife, then steals the surveillance videotape for his protection and later delectation. The movie then plunges into the depths of the ghetto where disenfranchised youths drug deal and shoot one another. Economic squalor is cited as the cause of the troubles (50s newsreel footage of the Watts riots adds a historical context), but increased paternal responsibility is posited as the only practical solution. While the relentless verbal and physical violence is often appalling – particularly when its casual glamour is so apparent – the most effective message focuses on boys bearing silent witness to the gun culture of their parents. Whether gawking at domestic killings or toying with their elders' guns, the children learn from the lunacy around them. Banned on video for over a year, cuts have been made from a scene considered instructional in the art of car theft! (S&S January 1994)

● Rental: First Independent VA 20213; Certificate 18



Brain dead: Joyce Meadows, John Agar

The Brain from Planet Arous

Director Nathan Juran/USA 1958

Launching a new video label for B-movies, *The Brain from Planet Arous* is far better than its title suggests. While conducting radiation tests, Steve March, a nuclear physicist, is taken over by a giant free-floating brain whose evil intentions include seducing Steve's fiancée and enslaving the world en route to becoming master of the universe. As in Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* made two years earlier, there is an element of 'reds under the bed' paranoia, but this is punctuated with moments of sheer lunacy, such as an unforgettable climax in which Steve attacks the brain with a large axe. The soundtrack jumps in places. (MFB No. 305)

● Retail: First Class Films SF 001; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG



A man of many faces: Jim Carrey

The Mask

Director Chuck Russell/USA 1994

Wacky comic Jim Carrey meets his match in the special effects wizardry of Chuck Russell's cartoon-inspired fantasy farce. A down-at-heel nobody discovers hidden powers when a magical mask transforms him into a super cool animated anti-hero. For once, Carrey's

rubber-faced antics are perfectly suited to the material, and work with rather than against the film (unlike his performance in last year's *Ace Ventura Pet Detective*). Russell displays an impressive flair for slapstick comedy while retaining the surrealistic thrust of his comic book source. (S&S October 1994)

● Rental: EV EVV 1311; Certificate PG

Speed

Director Jan De Bont/USA 1994

Beautifully described by one critic as the cinematic equivalent of a shark (i.e. if it stops moving it dies), the most ruthlessly efficient action picture of last year was delivered by cinematographer Jan De Bont. A psychotic bomber – enjoyably crazy Dennis Hopper – wires a bus to explode if the speed drops below 50 mph.

A lift and a train provide the settings for the opening and closing action sequences, but things really take off on the bus with bomb-disposal expert Keanu Reeves (in top form with handgun and sharp haircut) and gorgeously muscular Sandra Bullock. Cynics moan about the absence of witty dialogue, but with nail-biting thrills and spills such as these, who cares? (S&S October 1994)

● Rental: FoxVideo 8638; Certificate 15

Funny Man

Director Simon Sprackling/UK 1994

Reviled by critics and audiences on its theatrical release last year, Sprackling's debut horror farce is better served on video where its mixture of schoolboy humour and genuinely grisly horror

seem more suited. Although Christopher Lee's involvement is trumpeted, the stalwart horror legend makes only a cameo appearance. The real star is leading man Tim James who as the eponymous, murderous sprite maintains an excellent balance between comedy and cruelty. Too nasty (and possibly too weird) for mainstream taste, this low-budget British offering is sure to garner a cult following. A treat for lovers of the unpleasant. (S&S November 1994)

● Rental: PolyGram PG 1064; Certificate 18



Devilish pranks: Tim James

Ladislav Starewicz: Selected Films

Director Ladislav Starewicz/Lithuania/Paris 1911-34

A Busby Berkeley routine staged with rats; a Hogarthian depiction of hell in which animal skeletons cavort with toys – these are just two of many painstakingly created moments in this rare collection of Starewicz's animation. An early pioneer of stop-motion, Starewicz combined fantasy with the macabre to produce sumptuous and sometimes unsettling concoctions. The six films in the collection – *The Cameraman's Revenge*, *Town Rat*, *Country Rat*, *The Mascot*, *Love in Black and White*, *The Tale of the Fox* – are all in mint condition and with the original hand-tinting. The first two films are enhanced by music from Roger White who wrote the score for the recent release *Chess Fever*. (*The Tale of the Fox* reviewed S&S January 1994)

● Retail: Academy CAV 028; Price £15.99; B/W/Tinted; Inter-titles; Certificate U



Lion queen: Starewicz's 'The Tale of the Fox'

Sebastiane

Directors Derek Jarman/Paul Humphres/UK 1976

Jarman's first feature – part art school home movie, part homage to Pasolini and part skinklick (with its caressing camera work) – shows the convergence of his experimental Super-8 styles and more conventional influences. It also offers a taste of things to come; a fascination with sex and power, careful compositions and iconoclastic mischief (the soldiers playing frisbee). Filmed in Latin, with numerous muscular, tanned young men constantly preening themselves, and accompanied by a haunting score from Brian Eno, the story tells of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. Jarman alludes to Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St Matthew*, interpreting Sebastian's lack of conformity as a rejection of Roman phallo-centric heterosexuality, and to *Salò* in the saint's ritualised humiliation and torture. The final sequence, which culminates in Sebastian's point-of-view of the world seen through a fish-eye lens, is quite wonderful. (MFB No. 514)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1191; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Blown Away

Director Stephen Hopkins; USA 1994; MGM/UA V054807; Certificate 15

The nadir of the 'too-crazy-for-the-IRA' genre which includes *Patriot Games* and *A Prayer for the Dying* and uses the Troubles as a cheap backdrop for explosive action shenanigans. Sloppily directed, this sets Tommy Lee Jones as a Guinness-drinking terrorist against equally twisted adversary Jeff Bridges. Claptrap which insults Catholics, Protestants and atheists alike. (S&S September 1994)

Clear and Present Danger

Director Phillip Noyce; USA 1994; Paramount VHB 2992; Certificate 12

The best (which doesn't say much) of the limp Jack Ryan films inspired by the novels of Tom Clancy. Harrison Ford huffs and puffs as the straight-laced American agent, but is outshone in the acting and charisma departments by fiendish co-star Willem Dafoe. Clancy was reportedly unhappy with the unwieldy script, but a couple of impressively choreographed action sequences save the day. (S&S October 1994) □

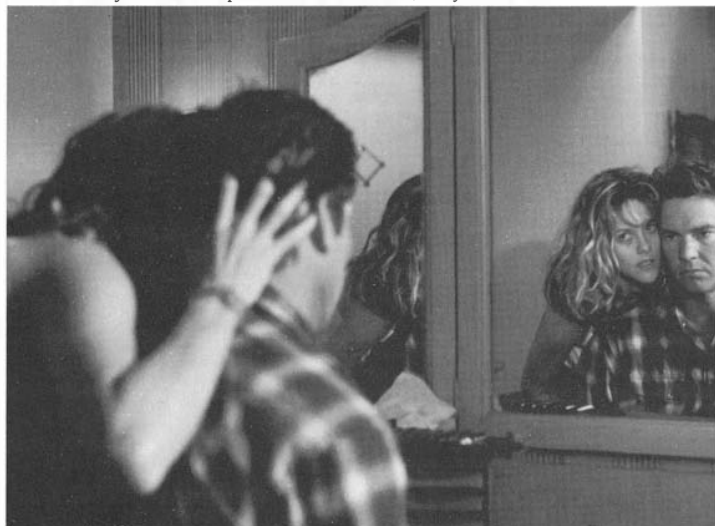
8 Seconds

Director John G. Avildsen; USA 1994; First Independent VA 20230; Certificate PG
Uninspiring vehicle showcasing the butch, teen-teasing talents of Luke Perry and Stephen Baldwin. Bull riding champion Lane Frost (Perry) sacrifices all in his quest to stay on a bucking bronco for the requisite eight seconds. Avildsen injects a certain amount of panache into the otherwise run-of-the-mill proceedings. (S&S November 1994)

Flesh and Bone

Director Steve Kloves; USA 1993; Paramount VHB 2895; Certificate 15

After a negligible UK theatrical release, Kloves' moody thriller is superior video



Close encounters: Meg Ryan, Dennis Quaid in 'Flesh and Bone'

viewing. Travelling slot-machine operator Arlis Sweeney (Dennis Quaid) teams up with Kay Davies (Meg Ryan) who is on the run from her husband. The couple discover that they are ominously linked via Sweeney's father (played with menacing charm by James Caan). Writer/director Kloves stretches the material a bit far (at over two hours, there are periods of languorous tedium), but overall it's worth making the effort. (S&S December 1994) □

Little Buddha

Director Bernardo Bertolucci; France/UK 1993; Hollywood D302712; Certificate 12

Misjudged nonsense in which Bertolucci tries and fails to wed high-brow philosophy with box-office appeal. A fashionable Seattle couple are distressed to learn that their small son may be the reincarnation of Lama Dorje, a Tibetan monk. Meanwhile, audiences are distressed to learn that Keanu Reeves has been cast as Siddhārtha. (S&S June 1994)

Only the Strong

Director Sheldon Lettich; USA 1993; PolyGram PG 1015; Certificate 15

Inaccurately hyped as the first movie to feature *capoeira* (fight dancing) – the honour belongs to Robert Wise's *Rooftops* – this formulaic feet and fists vehicle follows a former Special Forces agent (Mark Dacascos) in his attempt to save a group of Miami street kids from drug-addled corruption. Ponderous, melodramatic hogwash without the sleazy charm of its straight-to-video counterparts. (S&S January 1995)

The Punk and the Princess

Director Mike Sarne; UK 1993; PolyGram PG 1067; Certificate 15

A clumsy street fable, based on Gideon Sams' cult novel *The Punk*, from mercurial oddball Mike Sarne (director of *Myra Breckinridge* and responsible for the 60s pop song 'Come Outside'). A spotty youth enjoys a romance with a *nouveau riche* actress, but social divisions threaten their Romeo and Juliet-style relationship. Charlie Creed-Miles is convincingly grubby as David the 19-year-old punk, and Sarne directs with sincerity but without flair. (S&S December 1994)

Rapa Nui

Director Kevin Reynolds; USA 1994; EV EVV 1299; Certificate 12



Reckless driver: Sadie Frost in 'Shopping'

Magnetic screen presence Jason Scott Lee lends an enticingly spicy air to Reynolds' otherwise unremarkable scenic epic. On picturesque Easter Island, a labourer and a ruler compete in a ritualised battle to win the hand of alluring beauty Sandrine Holt. Visually striking, but sadly lacking a strong narrative. (S&S January 1995)

Shopping

Director Paul Anderson; UK 1993; PolyGram PG 1024; Certificate 18

Delightfully irresponsible, low-budget feature which meditates on the perils of joy-riding. Adopting the point-of-view of the offending drivers, writer/director Paul Anderson achieves a few visual coups and succeeds in capturing the nihilistic impulses of the young characters led by tempestuous talent Sadie Frost. A pumping rock soundtrack adds an air of exploitation which – in spite of the film-makers' moralistic posturings – the movie fully embraces. (S&S July 1994)

True Lies

Director James Cameron; USA 1994; Universal VHA 1807; Certificate 15

After much publicised negotiations, the BBFC granted this action fantasy a 15 video certificate, with cuts supervised by Cameron himself. Despite initial concerns about sexism, all the cuts are to do with violence and take in to special account the film's appeal for younger viewers. During a fight sequence set in a washroom, shots of a headbutt, blows to the face with a hand-dryer and to the head with a urinal have been reduced.

At approximately 53 minutes, Arnie Schwarzenegger's elbowing of brutish Bill Paxton has been trimmed, as has a later escape scene in which various victims are spiked in the eye, attacked with a tyre-iron, hung upside down and have their spines are snapped. To achieve continuity, Cameron re-jigged some shots around the censors' cuts, which total about eight seconds. (S&S September 1994)

Rental premiere

Cyborg Cop II

Director Sam Firstenberg; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 21669; Certificate 18; 93 minutes; Producer Danny Lerner; Screenplay Jon Stevens; Lead Actors David Bradley, Morgan Hunter, Jill Pierce

Low-budget schlock, directed without grace and displaying the offensive sexist exploitation which gave the horror genre such a bad reputation in the 70s (the actresses scream and display their breasts before being butchered). Lead David Bradley is awful, while Stevens' screenplay is little more than an excuse for a string of badly contrived shoot-outs.

Hollywood Madam

Director Fred Gallo; USA 1994; Odyssey ODY 431; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producers Phil Mittleman, Brenda K. Kyle; Screenplay Dennis Manuel; Lead Actors Michael Nouri, William Devane, Shannon Whirry
Hardbitten detective Jimmy Scavetti

PRIVATE VIEW

Jocelyn Moorhouse on 'Night of the Hunter'

Enduring

Have you ever had a dream in which you saw a woman tied to a car that sits in 15 feet of clear water, her hair streaming above her like seaweed, and above her an old man sits in a little boat, his fishing line drifting closer and closer to the woman's hair? Or maybe you think you dreamed of an eerie night in which a killer was chasing you – but ever so slowly, riding on horseback in silhouette and singing a folksy hymn in a gentle voice. It wasn't a dream, it was *Night of the Hunter*, directed by Charles Laughton from a screenplay by James Agee; the woman was Shelley Winters, and the killer chasing you was Robert Mitchum. Many people have seen this movie, but have forgotten they have, because when they remember it, they can't be sure if they are remembering a movie or a dream. In my film-watching experience, *Night of the Hunter* is the closest a director has come to capturing the hypnotic, compelling potency of the kind of nightmares we have when we are children.

I first saw *Night of the Hunter* on late night television when I was too young to realise I was watching a Gothic masterpiece. But it haunted me. I was one of those people who thought it was their own personal nightmare. Then about eight years ago, I saw it again – a friend had recorded it and called to say I had to see it. She hadn't started to tape it until five minutes into the story, so for a couple of years I had no idea how it began. (It has a great beginning – a little boy's father arrives home, gun in hand, the police hot on his heels. The boy has to watch his father brutally thrown to the ground and handcuffed. This scene is echoed beautifully at the movie's conclusion when Robert Mitchum is arrested in almost exactly the same way.)

Initially, I was knocked out by Stanley Cortez's stunning black and white cinematography, but after repeated viewing I have also developed immense respect for Laughton's direction and for

the actors' performances (in particular, Lillian Gish and Robert Mitchum, but Shelley Winters' as Mitchum's new wife is also quite unforgettable). Not only is the film very frightening – every single adult, with the exception of Lillian Gish, betrays the two helpless children – but it's filled with great beauty and compassion for the innocence of childhood. There is a recurring image of wandering, homeless kids begging for food. At one point Gish comments on children surviving horrendous experiences – "they abide and they endure" she says.

Like a Grimm's fairy tale it mixes magical beauty with primal fears. While elements of the movie now seem awkward and/or dated, for the most part it still holds tremendous power. My favourite moments: Lillian Gish in her rocking chair on the screened-in porch, holding a gun and singing a hymn with Robert Mitchum who sits just outside the house waiting for an opportunity to get inside to kill her and the children; the love/hate speech Mitchum makes in the ice-cream store while passing himself off as a preacher; the ghostly river journey made by the children with all the night creatures watching them sail by in the moonlight; and, at the end, when the mob of self-righteous do-gooders have turned into screaming maniacs calling for the murderer's blood, the moment when the camera pans off the mob to Gish with her arms around the homeless children she has taken under her wing, leading them off to safety. As Rachel, a benefactor of lost children, Lillian Gish scoops up any kid who needs her – "I'm an old tree with branches for many birds", she says, "I'm good for something in this world, and I know it."

Night of the Hunter was made in 1955 and was actor Charles Laughton's directorial debut. His talent as a director was assured and it is a sad loss to cinema that he never made another film. 'Night of the Hunter' is released on the Elite Collection



Waiting for the man: Lillian Gish protecting the children in 'Night of the Hunter'

(Michael Nouri) is assigned to investigate the sado-masochistic murders of a string of high class hookers and descends into the steamy underworld of Hollywood (stop me if you've heard this one before). Inevitably, Nouri becomes involved with alluring Shannon Whirry whose sexual favours are inextricably tangled up with the killings.

New Eden

Director Alan Metzger; USA 1994; Universal VHA 1811; Certificate PG; 85 minutes; Producer Harvey Fraud; Screenplay Dan Gordon; Lead Actors Stephen Baldwin, Lisa Bonet
A dull science-fiction fantasy, clearly intended as a pilot for a putative television show. Futuristic convicts are deposited on a lawless distant planet where Baldwin and Bonet strive to forge a new garden of Eden. Derivative post-Planet of the Apes nonsense.

Payback

Director Anthony Hickox; USA 1994; Hi-Fliers HFV 8290; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producers Sam Bernard, Natan Zahavi; Screenplay Sam Bernard; Lead Actors C. Thomas Howell, Joan Severance, Marshall Bell
Imaginative director Anthony Hickox lends a degree of polish to this otherwise formulaic erotic thriller with genre star and all-round poor actor C. Thomas Howell. An ex-con tracks down a retired prison guard in order to kill him and thus inherit an inmate's fortune.

Silhouette

Director Eric Till; USA 1994; Odyssey ODY 422; Certificate 15; 95 minutes; Producer Erv Zavada; Screenplay Carol Ann Hoeftner; Lead Actors JoBeth Williams, Corbin Bernsen, Stephanie Zimbalist
Career woman Nancy Parkhurst (JoBeth Williams) investigates her sister's murder in LA and discovers a trail of past allegiances which point to a split personality. Formulaic true-life trauma vehicle, worth watching for the once wonderful Williams (*Kramer vs Kramer*, *The Big Chill*).

Ski School 2

Director David Mitchell; USA 1994; First Independent VA 20228; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producers Jeff Sackman, David Mitchell; Screenplay James Napoli; Lead Actors Dean Cameron, Heather Campbell, Brent Sheppard, Wendy Hamilton, Bill Dwyer
Appalling comedy full of tit and bum gags which undermine the comic talent of Dean Cameron. A loveable rogue attempts to prevent his pneumatic ex-lover from marrying her dreary boyfriend. Cheap and tacky.

X-tra Private Lessons

Director Dominique Othenin-Girard; USA 1994; Medusa MO 414; Certificate 18; 83 minutes; Producer R. Ben Efraim; Screenplay Wm. Mernit; Lead Actors Mariana Morgan, Ray Garaza, Theresa Morris, Martin Hewitt
A female fashion photographer, in search of something more risqué, casts a nubile young woman to join her on a beach-bound advertising shoot. Excited by the sexually charged environment, the photographer embarks on a series of sexual adventures with her stubble sporting chauffeur. Dominique Othenin-Girard is the poor man's Gregory Hippolyte, failing to recreate the sexiness or the sub-textual meaning of Hippolyte's finest films (*Night Rhythms*, *Mirror Images*). Very boring.

Retail

The Aristocats

Director Wolfgang Reitherman; USA 1970; Walt Disney D241902; Price £15.99; Certificate U
Unremarkable animation in which an alley-cat (voiced by Phil Harris) escorts a family of cats back to Paris from the countryside where they have been dumped. Even though five top animators from Disney's original *Nine Old Men* were involved, the draughtsmanship is not of the finest. (MFB No. 444)

Blink

Director Michael Apted; USA 1994; Guild GLD 51722; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 (S&S June 1994)

A Bronx Tale

Director Robert De Niro; USA 1993; PolyGram 6341963; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 (S&S March 1994)

Cat Women of the Moon

Director Arthur Hilton; USA 1953; First Class SF 003; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
First class B-movie about a group of astronauts who encounter a bizarre feline race living on the moon. The sexual politics are as dated as the technology



Christopher Lee: 'Dracula Prince of Darkness'

(the crew's navigator, Nancy, is more interested in grooming her tousled hair after take-off than checking co-ordinates). The movie was pastiched in Joe Dante's and John Landis' *Amazon Women on the Moon*. (MFB No. 251)

Cronos

Director Guillermo del Toro; Mexico 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1186; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18 (S&S October 1994)

Deadly Advice

Director Mandie Fletcher; UK 1993; Curzon CV 0051; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 (S&S May 1994)

Dracula Prince of Darkness

Director Terence Fisher; UK 1965; Lumiere LUM 2184; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15
This sequel to Fisher's 1958 *Dracula* is one of Hammer's most atmospheric



Weakness of the soul: Klaus Maria Brandauer in 'Mephisto'

films, and is displayed in its full glory in a new widescreen print. Two brothers, Charles and Alan Kent, take their wives on a Carpathian holiday with the inevitable results. At the time, the BBFC were outraged by the planned beheading of Alan and persuaded the film-makers to tone the scene down to an off-screen throat-slitting; they were also appalled by Renfield's fly-eating scene and the obvious relish Dracula took in throttling Charles. Once again, Christopher Lee dons the swirling cape. Aka *The Bloody Scream of Dracula*. (MFB No. 385)

Une femme ou deux

Director Daniel Vigne; France 1985; Arrow AV 021; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15 Lacklustre Gallic farce about a case of mistaken identity. An archaeologist, Julian (G  rard Depardieu), unearths a fossilised skeleton which he claims to be the first Frenchwoman, and encounters an American advertising executive (Sigourney Weaver) posing as a scientist who wants to use the fossil in a perfume commercial. (MFB No. 629)

Four Weddings and a Funeral

Director Mike Newell; UK 1994; PolyGram 6317683; Price £14.99; Certificate 15 (S&S June 1994)

Friends

Director Elaine Proctor; UK/France 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1195; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15 (S&S January 1994)

Goodbye Pork Pie

Director Geoff Murphy; New Zealand 1980; Art House AHP 5016; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 Fast paced, high spirited road movie in which two Kiwi men (one of whom wants to be reunited with his estranged girlfriend at the other end of New Zealand) embark on a voyage of mayhem in a yellow mini. (MFB No. 572)

In the Name of the Father

Director Jim Sheridan; Eire/UK/USA 1993; Universal VHR 1720; Price £13.99; Certificate 15 (S&S March 1994)

The Joy Luck Club

Director Wayne Wang; USA 1993; Hollywood Pictures D922910; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S April 1994)

Jack Be Nimble

Director Garth Maxwell; New Zealand 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1188; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18 (S&S February 1994)

Jubilee

Director Derek Jarman; UK 1978; Tartan Video TVT 1190; Price £15.99; Certificate 18 Jarman's overrated punk celebration is one of his most notorious but least satisfactory films. Queen Elizabeth I is transported into the future where she observes a renegade women's collective indulge in outlandish misadventures. The film veers out of control and includes a couple of key scenes of complete tastelessness. (MFB No. 531)

Lili Marleen

Director Rainer Werner Fassbinder; West Germany 1980; Missing in Action MIAV 3424; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15 The least successful of Fassbinder's portraits of potent women stars Hannah Schygulla as celebrated cabaret singer Willie Bunterberg. Separated in 1938 from her Jewish lover Robert (Giancarlo Giannini), the couple meet again when Robert is sent on a secret mission back to Germany. Moments of unintentional hilarity spoil Fassbinder's attempt to deconstruct a Hollywood musical. (MFB No. 574)

The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum (Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum)

Directors Volker Schl  ndorff/Margarethe von Trotta; West Germany 1975; Connoisseur Video

END NOTES

By Mark Kermode

SIMON BOSWELL: FILMOGRAPHY

With this month's End Notes we begin an occasional series documenting the work of film score composers. The composer responsible for the recent surprise hit by Danny Boyle, *Shallow Grave*, and for Richard Stanley's controversial *Dust Devil*, Simon Boswell has achieved critical prominence in the 90s. Born 1956 in London, Boswell has long been a mainstay of the Italian horror genre, providing music for the films of, among others, Dario Argento, Lamberto Bava, and Michele Soavi. In Britain, he first gained recognition through his band Live Wire and his production work with such diverse pop acts as Nine Below Zero, Nik Kershaw, 23 Skidoo, Aztec Camera and Daisy Chain. His latest work includes the acclaimed Chris Menges' film *Second Best* and Clive Barker's fantasy epic *Lord of Illusions*. Currently, he is working on the score for *Hackers*, directed by Iain Softley of *Backbeat* fame.

1984

Phenomena (Creepers) Italy; director Dario Argento
Soundtrack featuring various artists available on Cinevox

1986

Stagefright (Aquarius) Italy; director Michele Soavi
Soundtrack recently issued as a limited edition CD of 1,200 copies by Lucertola Productions, Germany

Demoni 2 (Demons 2) Italy; director Lamberto Bava
Soundtrack featuring various artists available on Beggars Banquet

1987

La casa dell'orco (The Ogre/Demons 3: The Ogre) Italy; director Lamberto Bava
Per sempre, fino alla morte (Until Death/Changeling 2: The Revenge) Italy; director Lamberto Bava

Both part of the *Brivido Giallo* television series, soundtrack available on Cinevox
Il ragazzo dal kimono d'oro Italy; director Larry Ludman (aka Fabrizio De Angelis)
The Commander Italy; director Paul D. Robinson

Le foto di Gioia (Delirium) Italy; director Lamberto Bava
Soundtrack available on Ricordi

1988

Una notte nel cimitero (Graveyard Disturbance/Dentro il cimitero) Italy; director Lamberto Bava

Both part of the *Brivido Giallo* television series, soundtrack available on Cinevox
Una cena con il vampiro (Dinner with the Vampire) Italy; director Lamberto Bava

La casa 3 (Ghosthouse) Italy; director Humphrey Humbert (aka Umberto Lenzi)
Music fragments re-used from *Stagefright*
God's Payroll USA; director Yuri Sivo

L'oumo che non voleva morire (The Man Who Didn't Want to Die/The Man Who Refused to Die) Italy; director Lamberto Bava
Maestro del terrore (Prince of Terror) Italy; director Lamberto Bava

Il gioco (Il gioko/School of Fear) Italy; director Lamberto Bava

All three are part of the *High Tension* television series

Santa Sangre Italy; director Alejandro Jodorowsky

Soundtrack album available on President
Assassin USA; director John Hess
La chiesa (The Church) Italy; director Michele Soavi

Includes the song 'Imagination'
1990

La maschera del demonio (Mask of the Demon) Italy; director Lamberto Bava

This has never been officially released
Hardware UK; director Richard Stanley
Soundtrack available on Milan

Eye Witness Italy; director Lamberto Bava
Part of the *High Tension* television series
Voice of the Moon UK; director Richard Stanley (unreleased)

Baby Blood France; director Alain Roback
Provided the score for a re-dubbed English language version of this French shocker. This version has never been officially released

1991

Young Soul Rebels UK; director Isaac Julien
Mockba Italy; director Maurizio Bonuglia
Piccoli, buoni e ladri Italy; Berlusconi Communications (director unknown)
Made-for-television film

1992

The Outsider Italy; Titanus Productions (director unknown)
Made-for-television film

Dust Devil UK; director Richard Stanley
Soundtrack available on Varese
Sarabande

The Turn of the Screw UK; director Rusty Lemorande

Children of the Corn II: The Final Sacrifice USA; director David Price

Provided the title music and five cue segments

1993

The Crying Game UK; director Neil Jordan
Provided a dance song 'Second Coming' which plays briefly during a club scene
Love Matters USA; director Eb Lottimer
Piccolo grande amore (Pretty Princess) Italy; director Carl Vanzina

1994

Second Best USA/UK; director Chris Menges
Soundtrack available on Milan.

The Human Touch USA; director Richard Kletter

Shallow Grave UK; director Danny Boyle
Soundtrack available on EMI records.

1995

Jack and Sarah UK; director Tim Sullivan
Lord of Illusions USA; director Clive Barker
Soundtrack available on Mute Records.
Hackers USA; director Iain Softley

● Also available on Cinevox is 'Argento Vivo 1 and 2' - a compilation featuring music from the films of Dario Argento. Simon Boswell provided the music for the CD-i game 'BURN: CYCLE'.

Thanks to Mark Ashworth



Haunting tunes: 'Shallow Grave'

CR 154; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Intelligent adaptation of Heinrich Böll's story about the media witchhunt of Red Army sympathisers and the ruthless police methods used in seeking out terrorists. A fine example of political cinema which unfortunately is overlong, over-literal and has lost topicality. (MFB No. 520)

Mephisto

Director István Szabó; Hungary 1981; Art House AHO 6037; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Klaus Maria Brandauer gives an outstanding central performance in Szabó's finest film. Brandauer is mesmerising as a leftwing actor who sells out for increased power and fame after the Nazis revere his interpretation of Mephistopheles. Adapted from the novel by Klaus Mann, who based the story on his uncle's life. (MFB No. 573)

Mesa of Lost Women

Director Herbert Tevos; USA 1952; First Class SF 002; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Ridiculous B-movie with turkey regulars Katina Vega, Jackie Coogan and Mona McKinnon and an irritating omniscient narrator. A series of dastardly human/insect transplants suggest that the female species is deadlier than the male. (MFB No. 245)

The Mummy's Shroud

Director John Gilling; UK 1967; Lumiere LUM 2185; Price £12.99; Certificate PG
Hammer Film's third foray into the macabre world of Egyptology (and the last to be made at the Berkshire Bray Studios) is about an archaeological expedition which uncovers the tomb of the young Pharaoh Ka-to-Bey with tragic consequences. (MFB No. 401)

The Music of Chance

Director Philip Haas; USA 1993; PolyGram 6341943; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
(S&S April 1994)

Nada

Director Claude Chabrol; France/Italy 1974; Art House AHO 6028; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Packed with violence and scabrous black humour, *Nada* marks a change in direction for Chabrol who leaves behind the *Hélène* cycle and its attendant parochial quality. The focus is on political violence and the similarity in tactics employed by police and terrorists. A political faction called *Nada* kidnaps a politician on a visit to a Parisian brothel and forces a bloody confrontation with the authorities. (MFB No. 483)

The Night of San Lorenzo (La notte di San Lorenzo)

Directors Paolo Taviani/Vittorio Taviani; Italy 1981; Art House AHO 6048; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
The Taviani brothers weave myth and reality in a spell-binding tale of Tuscan resistance during the Second World War. A woman reflects on her childhood in the Northern Italian town of San Martino where a battle was staged on the eve of liberation between the resistance and the Fascists. Awarded the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1982, what stands out most in this follow-up to *Padre padrone* is the breathtaking score by Nicola Piovani. Aka *Night of the Shooting Stars*. (MFB No. 587)

On Deadly Ground

Director Steven Seagal; USA 1994; Warner

SO13227; Price £14.99; Certificate 15
(S&S May 1994)

The Pelican Brief

Director Alan J. Pakula; USA 1993; Warner SO12989; Price £14.99; Certificate 12
(S&S March 1994)

Philadelphia

Director Jonathan Demme; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 29882; Price £12.99; Certificate 12
(S&S March 1994)

The Pleasure (Il piacere)

Director Joe d'Amato; Italy 1985; Jezebel JEZ 009; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
Soft core pornographic nonsense in which a woman attempts to seduce her dead mother's lover by pretending to be her. (MFB No. 629)

Shadowlands

Director Richard Attenborough; USA 1993; Paramount VHR 3022; Price £13.99; Certificate U
(S&S March 1994)

ShortCuts

Director Robert Altman; USA 1993; Artificial Eye ART 104; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18
(S&S March 1994)

Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit

Director Bill Duke; USA 1993; Touchstone D441942; Price £12.99; Certificate PG
(S&S April 1994)

The Tall Blond Man with One Black Shoe (Le Grand blond avec une chaussure noire)

Director Yves Robert; France 1972; Arrow AV 020; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 15
This dated farce is probably better remembered from the 1985 Hollywood remake *The Man with One Red Shoe* with Tom Hanks. In order to set up a possible successor to his own job, a secret service chief secretly accuses a bumbling violinist of being a deadly spy. Ordinary events and conversations take on new meaning when observed by eavesdropping intelligence figures. The humour, however, wears thin. (MFB No. 481)

That's Entertainment! III

Directors Bud Friedgen/Michael J. Sheridan; USA 1994; MGM/UA SO53028; Price £12.99; Certificate U
Irresistible wallow in a once great studio's former glory. The choice of song and dance numbers from the MGM vaults is not as spectacular as the previous two anthologies, but the never-seen-before footage and the reuniting of nine performers who met through the studio is reason enough to turn the lights low and marvel. (S&S January 1995)

Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould

Director François Girard; Canada 1993; Electric Pictures E-066; Price £15.99; Certificate U
32 vignettes are woven eccentrically together so as to mirror the unconventional life of the brilliant Canadian pianist/composer and the structure of Bach's 'The Goldberg Variations'. Glenn Gould was arguably a unique interpreter of Bach's music, and this enjoyable portrait attempts to explain such strange behaviour as his radical refusal in the early 60s to play live again and his dalliances on the stockmarket. (S&S July 1994)

Thumbelina

Directors Don Bluth/Gary Goldman; USA/Eire 1994; Warner SO13080; Price £12.99; Certificate U
Following the dismal *Rock-A-Doodle*, further evidence that Bluth has not lived up to the success of his first film after leaving Disney, *The Secret of NIMH*. This full-length animation will no doubt find favour with children but parents are advised to find something else to do. (S&S August 1994)

The Tin Drum (Die Blechtrommel)

Director Volker Schlöndorff; West Germany/France 1979; Connoisseur Video CR 153; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
German history as seen through the eyes of a three-year-old boy who refuses to grow from the moment the Nazis take power. Any screen adaptation of Günter Grass' work will inevitably lose much of his fiction's complexity. However, Schlöndorff's version is a fine attempt even though it swings between styles and ignores the second half of the novel. (MFB No. 557)

Retail premiere

The Art of Love (L'Art d'aimer/Ars amandi)

Director Walerian Borowczyk; Italy/France 1983; Jezebel JEZ 007; Price £12.99; Certificate 18; 85 minutes; Producer Marcel Albertini; Screenplay Wilhelm Buchheim; Lead Actors Marina Pierro, Michele Placido, Laura Betti, Massimo Girotti, Philippe Lemaire
It looks as if the censor has taken to this print with very large scissors, draining the overrated Borowczyk's

sexual excesses of all life. Claiming in the press notes to be a "personal interpretation of Ovid's love poems" set in Imperial Rome, it resembles more a soft-focus masturbatory dirge.

Magic Cop

Director Tung Wei; Hong Kong 1990; Eastern Heroes EH 0005; Price £13.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG; 90 minutes; Producers Wallace Cheung, Eric Tsang; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Lam Ching-Ying, Michiko Nishiwaki
Special effects fantasy action pic. After the commercial success of the *Mr Vampire* series, Tung Wei (choreographer of John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*) casts Lam Ching-Ying in a familiar vampire hunter role. A cop (Lam) finds his traditional methods of law enforcement are revered when a demon from another world makes an unexpected appearance.

Silent Feminists

Directors Anthony Slide/Jeffrey Goodman; USA 1992; Academy CAV 023; Price £12.99; Certificate E; 90 minutes; Producers/Screenplay Anthony Slide, Jeffrey Goodman
Released to coincide with the centenary of cinema, this illuminating documentary focuses on the contribution of women film-makers in Hollywood to early film. Through insightful interviews with the survivors of the era, rare film clips and beautiful photos, the film looks at movie pioneers such as Dorothy Arzner, Alice Guy Blaché, Elsie Jane Wilson and Lois Weber. In particular, Weber is cited as "one of the genuine auteurs of the silent screen", who influenced the work of, among others, John Ford and Henry Hathaway.



It's a man's world: Dorothy Arzner, one of the film-makers featured in 'Silent Feminists'

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 0171 436 2327

Still untouchable

From Pankaj Butalia

In transit through England these last few days, I have come across different kinds of media coverage of the film *Bandit Queen* and the controversy surrounding it. One element of misinformation common to these is that the film has been "banned" in India, the obvious connotation being that the film's "radical political stance" has resulted in the Indian Government banning it. This thread is found in the television coverage by people like Barry Norman, in the writings of Derek Malcolm (who has just been to India and should know better), and of Ashish Rajadhyaksha (S&S October 94) and Shekhar Kapoor (both of whom live in India), and in the utterances of people like Farrukh Dhondy and Mala Sen (who are both involved in the litigation in India) and filmmakers like Udayan Prasad (S&S February), who is in constant touch with India. But nothing could be further from the truth, which is that two different benches of the Delhi High Court have issued interim injunctions against the screening of the film in India and abroad – despite hearing arguments from the highly paid lawyers of the producer, Mala Sen and Channel Four – on the basis of a petition filed by Phoolan Devi that the film invades her right to privacy and life by implicating her falsely in murder and by depicting aspects of her life which are humiliating and which she neither talked about nor gave her consent to.

Another common thread in the various writings has been that of contempt towards Phoolan Devi. Writers sneer at a former dacoit having scruples about how her life is represented and attribute her protests to her being manipulated by 'upper castes' or by her own desire to disown her past and carve out a political career for herself. The truth is that Phoolan Devi is not denying her criminal past, but rather protesting against its distortion to suit the saleability of a film, irrespective of the cost to her. Rather than take her seriously and address the question of what it is that she is objecting to, the film's producer, its supporters, script-writer and financiers have launched a vicious campaign to paint her as a greedy, lying, opportunistic parasite! This, in spite of the fact that they are the real financial beneficiaries of the distortions of her story. It is almost as if they do not want their party to be spoiled by a person they don't mind lauding on film but hate to have around them. In India too, those who practise class untouchability shout from treetops about the evils of caste society. This is not to deny the horrendous nature of caste society but to point out that it is a bogey that successfully silences all objections. People in the west feel so paralysed when confronted with Indian caste politics that they accept the simplest, most one-dimensional truths to be the 'real thing'.

Interestingly, Indian courts and media are beginning grudgingly to recognise the legitimacy of Phoolan Devi's stance and also the shabby manner in which those concerned in one way or another with the making of

the film have treated her. I am writing this only to put some aspects of this debate in a proper perspective.

New Delhi, India

Self-restraint a virtue

From Fred Aicken

In your February editorial you compared the effects of Charles Dickens' readings of the death of Nancy in *Oliver Twist* with those of Stone or Tarantino or Boyle in the "present pro-censorship climate". To imply that the artistic freedom of Stone or Tarantino or Boyle is as sacrosanct as that of Dickens is to overlook one important point.

Censorship apart, Stone/Tarantino/Boyle have the virtually unlimited freedom of expression of the film medium whereas Dickens had to make do with words printed on a page or spoken during a reading. But where Dickens, in depicting Nancy's death, chose to leave out all the details of the actual murder, Stone/Tarantino/Boyle leave nothing to their audiences' imagination. The result is not the horror experienced by the Dickens audiences but a cold-blooded sensationalism which can only produce greater insensitivity to violence plus new demands for more of the same.

You don't have to approve of censorship to admit that it has, in the past, forced writers and film-makers unable to recognise the virtues of self-restraint to suggest rather than crudely spell out.

Hatfield, Herts.

Very Canadian indeed

From John Tutt, Film Programmer

A letter of clarification and suggestion from Canada: Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, which was listed in the 1960-1980 section of the supplement, was wrongly included under the USA listing. The great part of Michael Snow's work (film, paintings, music) over the past several decades has been generously supported by one Canadian government arts council or another. This fact lends even more discredit to your error. Snow is an international artist, yes, but in context he is Canadian for sure. *Wavelength* was produced by every tax payer in Canada – a very Canadian film indeed. In addition, have you mentioned the following in your supplement? IMAX technology was invented, perfected and opened to the public in Toronto, Canada, in 1967, on Ontario Place at the Cinesphere – which is the oldest IMAX cinema in the world. The technology was invented by three gentlemen from Cambridge, Ontario, Canada.

Keep up the good work. We use the facts in your periodical to help us put together our bi-monthly film guide for the Princess Cinema – a repertory/art house cinema.

Waterloo, Ontario

Career choice

From Gary Sinyor, director

Whilst I am, of course, delighted that your reviewer says that *Solitaire for 2* (S&S February) is a rung or two up from *Leon the Pig Farmer* (high praise indeed!) I must question the interpretation that Amanda Pays' character, Katie, has to "choose between career and marriage". What actually happens is that her career mentor, Sandip, proves to be something of a rogue at the end of the film, which leads Katie to realise that her future

lies with Daniel. She does find love but not at the expense of her career.

Why on earth I should have to explain that Katie harmonises career and marriage escapes me, as everyone else seems to understand the point perfectly well. In fact, I am myself keen to get married and continue my career, if only to read the *Sight and Sound* review of my next film.

London W10

Lousy subtitling

From Ged Gleeson

Peter Dean is a little harsh on the video company Eastern Heroes in his criticism of the quality of the subtitles on *Hard Boiled 2: The Last Blood* (Wind Up, S&S March). As the subtitles in question are in both English and Cantonese, it's safe to assume that these were the titles added by the film's original Hong Kong distributor for its domestic release. It's easy to see why companies like Eastern Heroes and Made in Hong Kong prefer to use these 'ready-subtitled' prints, rather than generating a new set of titles.

Besides, those of us who love Hong Kong action cinema think of the lousy subtitling as one of the incidental pleasures of the genre. When Chow Yun Fat voices his suspicions of a drug smuggler's underwear in *Tiger on the Beat*, and it comes out as "I suspect her bra also contains cock," you can't really be irritated by it.

London E17

Just being entertaining

From A. J. Pryor

Your correspondent, Brett L. Renwick (Letters, S&S January) must be a comparative newcomer to *Sight and Sound*, or he would know not to take your writers as seriously as they take themselves. To most of them, every film has to be an absolute work of art, the more obscure the better. They find deep psychological motives behind every move a director makes when the director is simply telling a story with pictures. But you can be sure that he wants it to be entertaining, a word anathema to many S&S writers.

When I first started reading S&S, I thought that I was missing out somewhere, until I saw a filmed interview at the NFT in the late 50s, with David Lean. He happened to mention S&S. The enthusiastic interviewer beamed and said "Oh, you read *Sight and Sound*, then?" to which the great man replied, "Oh yes, of course. I even understand some of it!" This produced laughter and applause from the audience, since which time, knowing that I was in such exalted company, and not alone in my opinion of your contributors, I have read and enjoyed your wonderful magazine. It is still the most informative film journal, providing that one is aware of the King's New Clothes when reading it.

Aylesford, Kent

P.S. It's not all bad, of course. The Len Deighton article was excellent; it was factual, informative and, well, entertaining.

Photo credits this issue

Roman Polanski, p. 6, Steve Pyke; stills from *Frantic* and *Cul-de-Sac*, pp. 10-11, Ronald Grant; Nigel Hawthorne, p. 30, Nigel Parry; stills from *The Madness of King George*, pp. 31-33, Firooz Zahedi. With special thanks to BFI stills, posters and designs.

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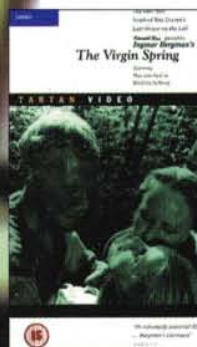
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